

EDITORIAL

## THE CAUTIOUS CANDIDATE

Senator Edward Kennedy's long-anticipated anti-Sherman statement put us in mind of Calvin Coolidge. "I do not choose not to run," was the gist of it. Nor did the Senator level any substantive criticisms at his potential opponent in the White House. On economic policy, he opined mildly, "I believe we're facing difficult economic problems today to which there are no magic or easy solutions." He did, however, fault the President's management of current programs—in a word, his "leadership."

Perhaps more should not be expected from a man kicking off a wait-and-see candidacy, but we were disappointed. The "leadership issue" is a Republican shibboleth. "Leadership" is the white horse on which Big John Connally intends to ride to the Presidency. It is Ronald Reagan's know-nothing truculence toward the whole world. We are reminded too of Joseph Gusfield's critique in this issue of the Carter Administration's effort "to maintain the illusion that there are no major issues, only bad managers."

Senator Kennedy tells us his ultimate decision will turn upon the state of the economy. Does the Senator really mean that a national depression is the high price of his candidacy? If the economy continues to slide into recession, then Kennedy is bandying words for tactical benefit or engaging in rhetorical stagflation. If, however, he intends to be truly rigorous in determining what shape the country is in come December, the question arises of which economic indicators he will follow. Treasury Secretary G. William Miller has said that the recession is already half over; other economists say it has hardly begun. Perhaps out of all this will emerge a realistic definition of "recession"—which would be a more useful contribution to the political dialogue than any of the candidates has made thus far.

**ZIMBABWE'S FUTURE**  
Sen. Paul Tsongas

**LETTER TO THE BORN AGAIN**  
James Baldwin

**STATE OF SIEGE**  
Penny Lernoux

**UNITED WAY**  
Timothy Saasta

**SEMANTIC SHUFFLE**  
Joseph Gusfield

**JOAN DIDION**  
Barbara Grizzuti Harrison

TALES OF JUDGE HOFFMAN

## THE GREAT CONSPIRACY TRIAL OF '69

WILLIAM M. KUNSTLER with STEWART E. ALBERT

September 24, 1979, marks the tenth anniversary of the opening session of surely one of the most bizarre spectacles in American legal history: the Chicago Conspiracy Trial. Before it ended some five months later, one defendant had been bound and gagged in the courtroom, a former Attorney General of the United States was not permitted to testify before the jury, and the two trial lawyers received aggregate sentences of almost six years in prison for contempt of court. In 1972, the appellate courts reversed every conviction on the ground, among many others, that Judge Julius J. Hoffman and the prosecutors had seriously compromised their oaths of office.

But neither the higher tribunals nor those of us at the Center for Constitutional Rights and others who worked on the defense team had any real idea of what was taking place in the wings before, during and after the trial itself. Only as documents have slowly become available under the Freedom of Information Act and from other sources have we been able to piece together the facts and widen our understanding of the dimensions of the Government's misconduct. For example, we now know that as early as October 23, 1968, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover had alerted his key Bureau offices that indictments would soon be sought against "approximately twenty principal leaders and activists of various New Left organizations," charging them with conspiracy to violate the new Federal anti-riot law in connection with their activities at the tumultuous

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# LETTERS.

## NO MIDDLE GROUND

### Washington

There is no—or precious little—middle ground in the Middle East. And if more proof of this were needed, it was found in the “dialogue” between Ramsey Clark [“Israel’s War on Lebanon”] and Yehuda Z. Blum [“A Rejoinder”] over the destruction in southern Lebanon [The Nation, Sept. 15].

The reason most Americans find it exasperating to make sense out of the conflict is that both sides unfailingly present their cases in absolutes. Each accuses the other of cowardice, perfidy and other moral unspeakables while the Palestinians (or Israelis) have a monopoly on justice and rectitude, depending on who is doing the talking. Messrs. Clark and Blum continue this lively but unproductive tradition, and the net result is that their dialogue was nothing more than two monologues.

Although Ambassador Blum’s statement came second, it is easier to talk about first, if only for the reason that it was entirely predictable.

Naturally, some of the hard “facts” presented are correct. It’s the way these facts are interpreted—while others are ignored—that makes Blum and Israel’s case insupportable. To safeguard Jewish lives, Blum says, Israel is compelled to strike at terrorist gangs before they strike Israel. The sanctity of human life, however, seems confined to Israel’s pre-1967 borders, and does not apply to the hundreds of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinian civilians who flee rather than bear the brunt of Israeli firepower. That Israel inflicts with impunity a degree of human suffering all out of proportion to the attacks on Jewish life is of no consequence.

Outright fraudulent statements are few and far between. Ambassador Blum’s contention, however, that Israel supports the “territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon” surely ranks among them, for the facts belie it. While certainly not solely to blame, Israel has done as much as any state in the region to insure internecine warfare in Lebanon, with no end in sight. It is playing the purely Machiavellian game of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

In contrast to Blum’s predictable defense is Ramsey Clark’s problematic attack on Israeli policy. Let me preface

my remarks by saying that I was a colleague of Mr. Clark’s on the trip and share in his denunciation of Israeli policy. Nevertheless, because my name was associated with assertions I believe are inaccurate, I feel impelled to dissent in public.

Two examples illustrate our differences. One is Mr. Clark’s use of the word “genocidal” during his description of Israel’s pre-emptive strategy. To use this word is to resort to the same tactics used by the partisans in this conflict. Genocide is a buzz word that Israelis and Palestinians frequently hurl at each other with equal inaccuracy. Is not the level of violence sufficient for condemnation without using the highly exaggerated charge of genocide?

Mr. Clark also says we saw no military targets of opportunity in southern Lebanon; moreover, he states, “There are none.” Our group had neither free rein nor the knowledge to go wherever we chose, and thus a blanket assertion such as Mr. Clark’s is indefensible. Evidence shows there are P.L.O. military targets in nominally civilian areas, and to assert otherwise is to ignore the ugly little facts on one side but not on the other. Moreover, I distinctly remember eating a generous lunch and dinner in what I would consider a military target—it was a gathering place for P.L.O. fighters—in the southern town of Nabatiyeh.

But if it were merely a question of exaggeration I am not sure I would have responded. Indeed, the most troubling aspect of Mr. Clark’s article is that he may damage the prospects for establishing a progressive position within the American left that can be trusted by both Palestinians and Israelis. Solidarity with justice in the Middle East is what is required rather than becoming another partisan in a conflict that already has a surfeit of them.

Max Holland

Center for International Policy

## ONE’S OWN HANDS

### Alamogordo, N.M.

Your July 7 article on the daisy chain conspiracies [“The Great Daisy Chain Scandal,” Fred J. Cook] was truly outstanding. Keep up the good work.

It is now very clear: energy big shots and their government regulators (Federal and state) are so busy humping one

another in the sack that energy survival means taking things into one’s own hands!

On March 5, 1978, I was interviewed by Mike Wallace on CBS’s *60 Minutes* (“Power Pilferage”) as the infamous publisher of “Stopping Power Meters.” Since then, I have heard from almost 100,000 very irate people who have had enough! Most feel, as succinctly stated by one irate customer, that “I refuse to be the rip-off victim of energy big shots, multinational corporations and the Washington, D.C., toad-clones that ‘run’ this country!”

John J. Williams, President  
Consumertronics Co.

## SEND THEM BACK

### Fargo, N.D.

I favor South Africa’s homeland policy [Aryeh Neier, “Selling Apartheid,” *The Nation*, Aug. 11-18] if it is also applied to the white tribes. Send them back to their origins in Europe. D. Lindberg

## LETTER LETTERS LETTER

### Missoula, Mont.

The exchange in the letters column of *The Nation* over the Joan Baez letter has interested me. For example, Corliss Lamont attacked Ms. Baez and your writer Aryeh Neier [“The Baez Letter,” *The Nation*, June 23] on the ground that they had mounted a “vicious attack on Vietnam [Letters, July 14-21]. Lamont’s language may impress some people, but it leaves me cold.

Such a vitriolic “analysis” overlooks—conveniently or otherwise—the fact that there isn’t a one-party dictatorship in the world wherein civil liberties are really tolerated or encouraged. Vietnam’s being a left-wing dictatorship makes not the slightest difference with respect to this fundamental principle!

Professor Lamont has stated, “It is amazing and depressing that no fewer than eighty-one American intellectuals . . . should have signed the Baez Open Letter.” To the undersigned, what is really amazing and depressing is that there are so many American intellectuals who seem to mind not in the slightest when civil liberties are suppressed—provided it is some left-wing regime that is doing the suppressing.

William H. Fisher, Professor  
Historical Foundations of Education  
University of Montana

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# EDITORIALS.

## Progressive Move

When the Government attempted to suppress publication of the Pentagon Papers by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, the logic of its position also drove it to harass Beacon Press and its parent, the Unitarian-Universalist Association, because Beacon published Senator Mike Gravel's edition of the papers; to spy on Daniel Ellsberg; to prosecute Ellsberg and Tony Russo for espionage; to create the White House "plumbers"; to burglarize the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist, and so on.

History seemed to have come full circle when the Government attempted to suppress publication of Howard Morland's article for *The Progressive* on the hydrogen bomb "secret." The logic of its position also drove the Government to suppress the text of a Federal court decision; to hurriedly reclassify documents it had declassified years ago; to suppress portions of legal briefs that referred to publicly circulated documents; to attempt to argue a judicial appeal behind closed doors; to suppress a letter to the editor of a student newspaper in California, and to write into the First Amendment, despite its plain and all-embracing language, exceptions for material that is "born classified" and for technical information. There seemed to be no telling where all this would end.

We trust that the Government has now extricated itself from this morass by ending suppression of *The Progressive* (despite its motion for a protective order on the defendants and their lawyers), and that the talk of criminal prosecutions is mere face-saving bluster. On that assumption, we congratulate all concerned (including all who joined with us in signing an amicus brief on behalf of *The Progressive*) for exploding the myth of secrecy and for reburnishing the First Amendment by insisting on its full protection.

East Tennessee State University  
Tennessee

# Zimbabwe's Future

As the delegates to the Zimbabwe-Rhodesian constitutional conference began their deliberations in London, the once soaring hopes for peace were more guarded. Many observers considered this conference the last chance to negotiate an end to the increasingly destructive Rhodesian war, but events preceding the conference were not encouraging. The inflexible pronouncements from Prime Minister Abel Muzorewa, the even more inflexible pronouncements of former Prime Minister Ian Smith after inauspiciously joining the conference, and the unprecedented Rhodesian air strikes against the regular army of Mozambique cast a pall over the conference's prospects.

These signals, while distressing, have been seen before. They are symptomatic of a well-developed strategy to preserve minority rule in Zimbabwe Rhodesia. It is not widely understood, however, that the internal-settlement tactics used by whites in Rhodesia have grown into a regional initiative that also involves Namibia and South Africa. The strategy of the internal settlement was born in Rhodesia when the besieged regime of Ian Smith struck a political accommodation with selected black leaders in March 1978. Faced with the prospect of an endless guerrilla war and unwilling to transfer power to the majority, the authors of the Rhodesian internal settlement crafted the illusion of majority rule, then dug in against their guerrilla opponents and courted recognition and assistance from the West. Inspired by the Rhodesian example, Namibia and South Africa also set out on the internal-settlement path.

Although the strategy is promoted as a solution to the racial crises in southern Africa, the primary intent is to improve the image of minority rule in the West. The most highly publicized features of the strategy include staged elections involving black moderates, new constitutions establishing an illusion of majority rule, and the dismantling of petty segregation. Rhodesia and Namibia have fully adopted these devices, while South Africa moves more cautiously in the same direction.

The first staged election took place in Namibia during December 1978. Previewing the April 1979 election in Rhodesia, the Namibian vote took place under conditions of guerrilla war and martial law. The objective was a large voter turnout to convince the West that the internal "moderates" were the people's choice. Widespread coercion and deception were used to get out the vote. The high polls in both Namibia and Rhodesia have been trumpeted around the world as a popular mandate for the internal settlement and as a rejection of the "Communist terrorists." South Africa is moving more slowly because a general election for all South Africans contradicts apartheid's basic premise of political separation. But recent proposals from the Government indicate that elaborate blacks-only elections may be used in the future to help improve apartheid's image abroad.

The constitutional formulas for Namibia and Rhodesia are a second propaganda device to blur the sharp contours of racial domination. The Constitutions do allow blacks to

participate in the central Government, but they carefully circumscribe black power and leave the white minority in effective control of the decision-making process. In South Africa, constitutional formulas of the internal-settlement variety, such as confederalism and plural democracy, are receiving serious consideration in official circles.

The abolition of petty segregation is another high-profile feature of the internal-settlement strategy. In Namibia and Rhodesia, all public facilities are now open to blacks. In South Africa, certain hotels and restaurants have been desegregated. An end to petty segregation removes glaring evidence of racial domination but does not alter the fundamental distribution of economic and political power.

The unpublicized features of the internal-settlement strategy are preservation of the economic status quo and waging a war to victory over external guerrilla groups. These tactics reveal clearly the strategy's objective of preserving minority control. The economic status quo is predicated upon unbalanced distribution of wealth and property between the races, and internal-settlement regimes do not disturb it. Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa have taken no real steps to redistribute land, to change the wage structure or to provide equal education for the races. This extreme imbalance in the distribution of wealth and power fuels black antagonism and furnishes guerrilla movements with more recruits.

The internal-settlement strategy also assumes protracted conflict and aims for a military victory over its black opponents. In all three states, military spending is high, and the commitment to a successful counterinsurgency campaign is total. Thus, South Africa provides substantial assistance to Rhodesia and Namibia, while contending with its own guerrilla threat on its borders and in the cities.

The internal-settlement strategy contains both dangers and opportunities for the United States and the West. The opportunities for the West are to force this trend toward limited black rule further than its authors intend. The risk for minority-rule governments is that the circumscribed grants of power to the black majority will get out of hand. Western nations such as the United States should pressure the internal-settlement regimes to live up to their rhetoric, and to adopt genuine majority rule. To fully exploit this opportunity, we must avoid taking any action that would provide implicit support of the internal-settlement strategy. The architects of the strategy calculate that only the opprobrium heaped on apartheid stands in the way of American support for the anti-Communist, pro-capitalist governments of southern Africa.

First in line for American support is Zimbabwe Rhodesia. The war is devastating the Zimbabwean economy and forcing the white population to leave in large numbers. But economic sanctions prevent a successful campaign for American support. Rhodesia's first priority is, therefore, to insure that the United States lift sanctions as soon as possible. The United States faces a clear choice on that issue. We can lift sanctions unconditionally and thereby line up with the internal-settlement strategy, or we can insist on further progress toward genuine majority rule.

We must thus watch closely the outcome of the constitutional conference in London. If real power is transferred to

the black majority, the United States should lift the economic sanctions. Any result short of genuine majority rule, however, will place the sanctions issue in question once again.

Nothing could serve Soviet interests more effectively than U.S. support for minority rule. It will give the Russians exclusive access to nationalist groups in South Africa. Soviet standing in the Third World will soar as our star falls. We will deplete our resources in support of the wrong side in unwinnable wars. When majority-rule governments come to power in southern Africa, they will accept the Soviet Union as their loyal patron and reject the United States as their proven foe. Such will be our fate if we blindly embrace the internal-settlement strategy. SENATOR PAUL TSONGAS

*Senator Paul Tsongas, Democrat of Massachusetts, is co-coordinator of the Congressional Ad-Hoc Monitoring Group on southern Africa.*

## Stanley Levison

At a time when blacks and Jews are in media tension, we do well to meditate on the passing of Stanley Levison, who died on September 12 at the age of 67. In her memoir, *My Life With Martin Luther King Jr.*, Coretta King writes that of the thousands of tributes that had been paid to her husband since his death, "the one which best describes the meaning of my husband's life and death was written by two of his most devoted and trusted friends, Harry Belafonte and Stanley Levison."

Stanley Levison wrote that "Martin Luther King was not a dreamer although he had a dream." The same might have been said of Levison himself, a Jew who devoted his life to the cause of human rights. Working alongside Dr. King since the days of the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott, his contributions were the nuts and bolts of any dream machine—speech drafts, fund raising, legal advice, putting down the deposit on the hall, general logistics, and more.

But King looked to Levison for more than detail work; he was adviser, consultant and confidant. When King was indicted on a trumped-up charge in the late 1950s and was reluctant to use civil rights movement funds to defend himself, it was Levison who told him, "Martin, it isn't your responsibility to defend yourself. You are in trouble because of who you are and all you have done for the movement and this country. It is the country's duty to see that you are properly defended."

But Stanley Levison's claim to history's notice is not, alas, limited to his civil rights work. It was precisely because he did not seek the limelight, had no public constituency, never even held a press conference, that he was a target of opportunity for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a pawn in J. Edgar Hoover's attempt to checkmate (and destroy) the King. Levison was a "secret Communist," an "enemy agent," a sinister force in the King entourage, Hoover's F.B.I. told Robert Kennedy's Justice Department. Andrew

Young, then a King lieutenant, has confirmed that the President of the United States, John Kennedy, "took Martin off into the Rose Garden and said there were reports that the Southern Senatorial strategy was going to be to attack the civil rights bill and the whole movement as Communist-inspired and that they were going to use Levison . . . as scapegoat. He asked Dr. King to dissociate himself from [him], not because he believed anything about [him], but to protect the movement."

For the good of the movement and to improve prospects for passage of the civil rights bill, King at first agreed to accept J.F.K.'s recommendation, but there were speeches to give, engagements to keep, ledgers to interpret, and King couldn't believe that Levison would use him in this way and so he resumed relations with his close friend. On hearing (or overhearing) this, the F.B.I. received the Attorney General's permission to tap King's phone. Over the years, Kennedy men have given varying explanations for Kennedy's approval of this tap, none of them satisfactory. And over the years it has become clear that the F.B.I. allegations about Levison were no more true than the racist fantasies that inspired the recently revealed COINTELPRO campaign that contributed to the tragic suicide of the actress Jean Seberg.

There are any number of lessons to be learned from this sordid assault on a good man's character, not least among them that no matter how lofty the ends (passage of the civil rights bill included), the President and his Attorney General have no business sanctioning the dirty means that seem endemic to the intelligence enterprise. Undoubtedly some of the alumni of Camelot will resurface in any Ted Kennedy campaign for the Presidency. Now that the principals are dead and no security interest can conceivably be served by silence, Kennedy's best and brightest owe it to the memory of Levison, to history, to the continued education of a public still innocent of the scandalous misdeeds committed in the name of national security, to tell the full story of the way in which an exceptional citizen's reputation was held hostage in a game of bureaucracy and power.

## Cuba Trip

There are still some openings on *The Nation's* two-week sociocultural tour to Cuba, November 11-25, 1979. The tour will be based in Havana, with a side trip to Santiago de Cuba, and will include visits and seminars with Cuban officials in a wide variety of disciplines, as well as visits to schools, rural development projects, public ministries and agencies.

The cost of the tour is \$1,555 per person including round-trip air fare from New York City; hotel accommodation in Cuba in the best available rooms, double occupancy; all meals in Cuba; all transportation and sightseeing in Cuba and any other specified tour activities. *Reservations, with a \$300 deposit, must be made by October 5.* Contact Karen Wilcox at *The Nation*, (212) 242-8400, for an itinerary and more information.

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# VARIATIONS

CALVIN TRILLIN

**T**here I am, bombing down Interstate 95, thinking my usual six-lane interstate kind of thoughts. I am wondering how much larger the pyramids might be if there had been a pyramid construction industry lobby for the Pharaohs to contend with. I am considering whether those in charge of the next gas-crisis allocation plan might be made to see the wisdom of a system that allowed people with even-numbered license plates to buy gas on even-numbered days, people with odd-numbered license plates to buy gas on odd-numbered days, and people with their names or initials spelled out on their license plates to buy no gas at all.

The children are in the back seat, continuing their odd custom of not arguing about who is encroaching on whose side of the seat. I know that in the view of some of my Eastern analytical friends I should worry about this. It is true that as children, my sister and I covered thousands of miles of the Great American West ignoring mountains and mesas and buttes (if they are different from mesas) and Indian moccasin stands and roadside zoos and Burma-Shave signs and whatever else was visible out the window in order to give our complete concentration to guarding our territory. I imagine one of my Eastern analytical friends asking me if I'm worried about the possibility that our girls might be sublimating natural sibling hostilities that should be expressed. I imagine another of my Eastern analytical friends asking me if we feel guilty about not imbuing our children with the sort of contentiousness that will allow them to persevere in a world dominated by delicatessen lines. I think of myself telling both of my Eastern analytical friends to buzz off, and I keep bombing down Interstate 95.

My wife is sitting beside me in the front seat, watching me glance nervously at the state-police car in the rear-view mirror, and asking me again why I am so afraid of policemen. My wife, being a romantic, used to think that my feeling that all policemen were after me came from my experience as a reporter in the South, but I finally admitted that it comes from my experience as a teen-ager in Kansas City, Mo. Talk about traits imbued during childhood! Every teen-age American boy knows that the police are lying in wait to catch him going three miles over the speed limit (posted on a smudged sign behind a thick hedge)—allowing the viciously anti-teen-age judges to strip him of his God-given right to drive. Every teen-age American girl who doesn't look like a teen-age American boy knows that the policeman who stops her for an illegal left turn that snarled traffic for six blocks is likely to put on the stern look that he has been told makes him resemble a slightly heavier Gary Cooper and say something like, "Well, you promise me you'll be real careful in the future, little lady, because we sure wouldn't want anything to happen to you."

It occurs to me, bombing down Interstate 95, that pressure on police forces to hire women and gays will eventually change all of this. A female motorcycle cop will stop a teen-age girl for a bad turn and say, "Don't give me that help-

less-little-me smile, sister; I wrote the book on that one." A gay state trooper will stop a teen-age boy for going 80 in a 50-miles-per-hour zone and let him go with a warning—asking the teen-ager, while returning his driver's license, if anybody had ever told him he looks a lot like James Dean. For the time being, I am still glancing nervously at the state-trooper car in the rear-view mirror.

**I** pass a Cadillac Seville and feel a twinge of envy—not for the Seville but for the trip computer that I know, from an article in *The Times*, may be ticking away inside of it. When Cadillac announced that the Seville's options would henceforth include a computer, I naturally belittled the entire project. A computer, we are always being told, is only as good as what is programmed into it, and I figured the Cadillac folks could be counted on to apply the same corporate wisdom to computer programming that they once applied to the need for fender fins. Sure enough, *The Times* said that one bit of information that could be conjured up from the computer at the press of a button was how many miles the Seville was getting to the gallon—a figure that these days is likely to traumatize a Cadillac driver to the point of making him a danger to navigation. *The Times* said the computer could also calculate "speed in revolutions per minute" and "engine temperature in degrees"—just the sorts of things I have no interest in whatsoever. I was once told of a squeamish man who liked to envision his insides as being very much like the inside of a potato, and I prefer to envision the inside of automobiles exactly the same way. The Cadillac folks, I said at the time, never seem to have me in mind when they make one of their little improvements. Their market research people have never captured my profile, or, more likely, their market research people know my likes and dislikes precisely and also know that I am fated never to trade up from a Volkswagen Rabbit.

I have to admit, though, as I bomb down Interstate 95, that I covet the Seville's computer. There is no reason, after all, why the computer's program could not be varied. Instead of calculating the estimated time of arrival, "based on the variables of speed, stops, etc.," it could calculate when I will next have to stop to let my younger daughter go to the bathroom, based on the variables of 7-Up intake, nagging, and parental insensitivity. It could be of great comfort to me if it were programmed to tell me the next time we could, according to the percentages, expect to have our luggage rack fall off the car—surely a date blessedly far in the future for a family that has, the computer knows, already had its luggage rack fall off the car once. Having fed the computer statistics gathered from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the American Civil Liberties Union, I could punch a few buttons and see what my chances were of encountering a gay state trooper. Thinking of the possibilities of a properly programmed computer, I am bombing down Interstate 95.

## ARTICLES.

Open Letter to  
The Born Again

JAMES BALDWIN

I met Martin Luther King Jr. before I met Andrew Young. I know that Andy and I met only because of Martin. Andy was, in my mind, and not because he ever so described himself, Martin's "right-hand man." He was present—absolutely present. He saw what was happening. He took upon himself his responsibility for knowing what he knew, and for seeing what he saw. I have heard Andy attempt to describe himself only once: when he was trying to clarify something about me, to someone else. So, I learned, one particular evening, what his Christian ministry meant to him. Let me spell that out a little.

The text comes from the New Testament, Matthew 25:40: *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

I am in the strenuous and far from dull position of having news to deliver to the Western world—for example: *black* is not a synonym for *slave*. Do not, I counsel you, attempt to defend yourselves against this stunning, unwieldy and undesired message. You will hear it again: indeed, this is the only message the Western world is likely to be hearing from here on out.

I put it in this somewhat astringent fashion because it is necessary, and because I speak, now, as the grandson of a slave, a direct descendant of a born-again Christian. *My conversion*, as Countee Cullen puts it, *came high-priced/I belong to Jesus Christ*. I am also speaking as an ex-minister of the Gospel, and, therefore, as one of the born again. I was instructed to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit those in prison. I am far indeed from my youth, and from my father's house, but I have not forgotten these instructions, and I pray upon my soul that I never will. The people who call themselves "born again" today have simply become members of the richest, most exclusive private club in the world, a club that the man from Galilee could not possibly hope—or wish—to enter.

*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* That is a hard saying. It is hard to live with that. It is a merciless description of our responsibility for one another. It is that hard light under which one makes the moral choice. That the Western world has forgotten that such a thing as the moral choice exists, my history, my flesh, and my soul bear witness. So, if I may say so, does the predicament into which the world's most

celebrated born-again Christian has managed to hurl Mr. Andrew Young.

Let us not belabor the obvious truth that what the Western world calls an "energy" crisis ineptly disguises what happens when you can no longer control markets, are chained to your colonies (instead of vice versa), are running out of slaves (and can't trust those you think you still have), can't, upon rigorously sober reflection, really send the Marines, or the Royal Navy, anywhere, or risk a global war, have no allies—only business partners, or "satellites"—and have broken every promise you ever made, anywhere, to anyone. I know what I am talking about: my grandfather never got the promised "forty acres, and a mule," the Indians who survived *that* holocaust are either on reservations or dying in the streets, and not a single treaty between the United States and the Indian was ever honored. That is quite a record.

Jews and Palestinians know of broken promises. From the time of the Balfour Declaration (during World War I) Palestine was under five British mandates, and England promised the land back and forth to the Arabs or the Jews, depending on which horse seemed to be in the lead. The Zionists—as distinguished from the people known as Jews—using, as someone put it, the "available political machinery," i.e., colonialism, e.g., the British Empire—promised the British that, if the territory were given to them, the British Empire would be safe forever.

But absolutely no one cared about the Jews, and it is worth observing that non-Jewish Zionists are very frequently anti-Semitic. The white Americans responsible for sending black slaves to Liberia (where they are still slaving for the Firestone Rubber Plantation) did not do this to set them free. They despised them, and they wanted to get rid of them. Lincoln's intention was not to "free" the slaves but to "destabilize" the Confederate Government by giving their slaves reason to "defect." The Emancipation Proclamation freed, precisely, those slaves who were not under the authority of the President of what could not yet be insured as a Union.

It has always astounded me that no one appears to be able to make the connection between Franco's Spain, for example, and the Spanish Inquisition; the role of the Christian church or—to be brutally precise, the Catholic Church—in the history of Europe, and the fate of the Jews; and the role of the Jews in Christendom and the discovery of America. For the discovery of America coincided with the Inquisition, and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Does no one see the connection between *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Pawnbroker*? In both of these works, as though no time had passed, the Jew is portrayed as doing the Christian's usurious dirty work. The first white man I ever saw was the Jewish manager who arrived to collect the rent, and he collected the rent because he did not own the building. I never, in fact, saw any of the people who owned any of the buildings in which we scrubbed and suffered for so long, until I was a grown man and famous. None of them were Jews.

And I was not stupid: the grocer and the druggist were Jews, for example, and they were very very nice to me, and

*James Baldwin, a member of The Nation's Editorial Board, is the author of the newly released Just Above My Head. (The Dial Press).*

to us. They were never really white, for me. The cops were white. The city was white. The threat was white, and God was white. Not for even a single split second in my life did the despicable, utterly cowardly accusation that "the Jews killed Christ" reverberate. I knew a murderer when I saw one, and the people who were trying to kill me were not Jews.

But the state of Israel was not created for the salvation of the Jews; it was created for the salvation of the Western interests. This is what is becoming clear (I must say that it was always clear to me). The Palestinians have been paying for the British colonial policy of "divide and rule" and for Europe's guilty Christian conscience for more than thirty years.

Finally: there is absolutely—repeat: *absolutely*—no hope of establishing peace in what Europe so arrogantly calls the Middle East (how in the world would Europe know? having so dismally failed to find a passage to India) without dealing with the Palestinians. The collapse of the Shah of Iran not only revealed the depth of the pious Carter's concern for "human rights," it also revealed who supplied oil to Israel, and to whom Israel supplied arms. It happened to be, to spell it out, white South Africa.

Well. The Jew, in America, is a white man. He has to be, since I am a black man, and, as he supposes, his only protection against the fate which drove him to America. But he is still doing the Christian's dirty work, and black men know it.

My friend, Mr. Andrew Young, out of tremendous love and courage, and with a silent, irreproachable, indescribable nobility, has attempted to ward off a holocaust, and I proclaim him a hero, betrayed by cowards. □

## ■ STATE OF SIEGE

# Colombia's Slide Into Dictatorship

PENNY LERNOUX

*In this country people should weep for the living, not the dead.*

—Luis Vidales

**V**idales, 75, speaks from experience. Earlier this year, the Colombian poet was arrested in his Bogotá residence at dawn by military commandos and taken to the Brigade of Military Institutes (B.I.M.) for interrogation about "subversive" activities. Despite a serious heart ailment, Vidales was kept blindfolded and incommunicado for twelve hours at B.I.M. until a national outcry secured his release.

The arrest of an elderly man of such literary eminence without substantiated charges would have been unthinkable

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in Colombia three years ago, but these days neither social nor intellectual prominence is a guarantee against imprisonment. Since September of last year, there have been hundreds of dawn military invasions of houses, apartments and offices. More than 2,000 people were detained in January in Bogotá alone, according to Amnesty International. A number of constitutional guarantees have been suspended, including *habeas corpus* for those suspected of subversion; torture has become commonplace, as documented by the Colombian Congress, the state legislature of Antioquia and other institutions.

While the crackdown is still mild compared with what goes on in the military regimes of Chile and Argentina, the unprecedented number of arrests, use of torture and growing involvement of the military in Government affairs have seriously jeopardized Colombia's democracy, once considered the most stable in South America. Not a few critics, including the former Conservative Foreign Minister Alfredo Vásquez Carrizosa, believe the country is going the way of Uruguay, where constitutionally elected Presidents ceded so many powers to the generals that the military eventually took over the Government.

The slide into what Supreme Court Justice José María Velasco calls a "constitutional dictatorship" has been gradual and, for the political elite, only recently perceived after the arrest of prominent intellectuals, professionals and clerics. (There has always been a certain amount of repression in the countryside, but peasants have neither the money nor the influence to obtain a public hearing.)

Contrary to the claims of President Julio César Turbay and the chiefs of the armed forces that harsh measures are necessary to deal with a left-wing subversive threat, critics of the Government charge that the real cause of militarization is economic unrest. As is the case everywhere in Latin America, there has been a massive population shift from the farms to the cities, with the result that two-thirds of Colombia's twenty-six million people now live in urban areas. Unlike the illiterate, disorganized and traditionally conservative peasants, the new urban proletariat is at least semiliterate, has the beginnings of an organized base in labor unions and shows marked signs of disaffection, even hostility, to the country's traditional center-right political parties. These restless slum millions are demanding a bigger slice of the country's economic pie at a time when wealth has become increasingly concentrated in twenty-four *conglomerados*, or family-owned conglomerates. "Nothing ever happens here," the Colombians' self-satisfied rejoinder to social unrest elsewhere in Latin America, has not been heard since September 1977, when a nationwide strike organized by the country's four labor federations nearly toppled the Government.

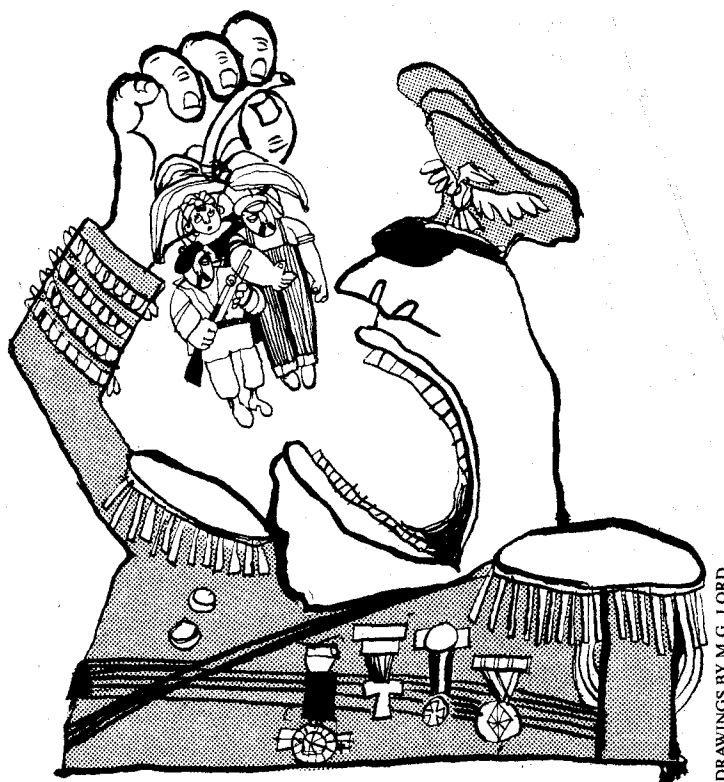
Shortly after the violent strike, the armed forces gave Turbay's predecessor, President Alfonso López Michelsen, an ultimatum to discipline the independent judiciary and press and dissident members of Congress, who together formed the principal opposition to militarization. López Michelsen was unable to satisfy the generals' demands, because of opposition from the Supreme Court, but Tur-

bay, using his considerable political skills and the political honeymoon that every Colombian President enjoys in his first 100 days in Government, pushed through a national security statute a month after taking office in August 1978. Supplemented by the sweeping constitutional powers the Government has already acquired under a permanent state of siege, the statute has enabled the armed forces to arrest, interrogate and judge troublemakers in the labor unions and their supporters on the intellectual left. That the object of the crackdown is "subversion" in the cities was left in no doubt by Gen. Luis Carlos Camacho Leyva, Turbay's defense minister, who said that the small guerrilla groups operating in rural areas, and dating from the 1950s, have "never presented a danger for institutional stability."

The necessity for armed force to hold down economic expectations is not a Colombian phenomenon but common to many Latin American countries, where the gap between rich and poor is widening. In Colombia's case, however, the enormous increase in urban crime, itself a reflection of economic frustrations, coupled with the recent boom in the narcotics traffic, gave the Turbay Government a legitimate excuse for a display of force. And in January of this year, a small urban guerrilla group known as the 19th of April Movement—M-19 for short—tunneled into a Bogotá military arsenal and made off with some 5,000 guns. Most of the arms were subsequently recovered in the roundups, and by July, Justice Minister Hugo Escobar Sierra was claiming that the war on crime and subversion had been a "success." Undoubtedly, the number of urban kidnappings has declined, but other common crimes, particularly robberies and homicides, have not diminished, and the marijuana and cocaine traffic flourishes. (By the Justice Ministry's own reckoning, only 597 of the 68,000 people arrested between August 1978 and July of this year were involved in narcotics traffic, although the campaign against the drug mafias is supposed to be a priority target. The ministry did not specify how many of the 68,000 were political prisoners.)

Because so many of those arrested had nothing to do with common or terrorist crimes, prominent Colombians who originally supported the harsh measures, including influential members of Turbay's own Liberal Party, now question the security statute and the hidden economic motives for repression. The country's chief problem is not security, argues Liberal Senator Luis Carlos Galán, but the increasingly explosive social and economic situation. "The security statute is simply a repressive answer to misery."

The social malaise is matched by a political malaise. The rise of the military dictatorship of Gen. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, which persecuted both Liberals and Conservatives, forced the parties to agree to shelve their differences and abide by a sixteen-year pact known as the National Front, under which they shared the Government and alternated the Presidency. But over the years, the Conservatives and Liberals became indistinguishable, their chief goal being to obtain as many bureaucratic posts as possible from the bipartisan pork barrel. Voter abstention grew accordingly, and, bereft of any political opposition save for the small,



divided left, Liberals and Conservatives lost touch with their own reality. Meanwhile, the country's Presidents continued to concentrate power in the executive, reducing the Congress to an ineffectual debating society. "The parties are finished," says Fabio Lozano Simonelli, scion of one of Colombia's oldest Liberal families. "Their theories belong in a museum." Agrees former Finance Minister Alfonso Palacio Rudas, the Liberals' crusty political critic: "Neither party has had a new idea in ages . . . yet the survival of democracy is at stake. Only ideas and programs that satisfy the hopes of the poor and marginalized masses, or the majority, will obtain their support."

Former President Carlos Lleras Restrepo, the visionary Liberal statesman, continues to be a voice crying in the wilderness, but at 71 the voice is weak, and most of his earlier following has dispersed through futile infighting with the Turbayistas, who dominate the Liberal Party. The Conservatives are similarly split, and the businessmen who once showed an astute willingness to maintain a dialogue with the labor movement, even to anticipate its demands, have been replaced by a new breed of tough entrepreneurs, many in partnership with the multinationals, who privately say they would welcome a military coup. There are exceptions, of course, businessmen and politicians who represent a strain of liberal traditions that has survived both political violence and the National Front, but they are a disorganized minority and some are afraid to speak out, thanks to what critics describe as a "psychology of terror," including threats by the American Anti-Communist Alliance, a right-wing death squad in the style of Argentina's notorious Triple A.

When Turbay counters criticism by stating that his administration is not doing anything that his predecessors did not do, he is correct—to a point. Colombia has been gov-

erned by a near-continuous state of siege for more than thirty years, and there is nothing new in military trials of civilians or arrests of striking workers. It is the degree of repression that is different, and the arguments for it. State-of-siege powers were used cautiously by the first Presidents of the National Front, but there was no systematic use of electric shock, burns, immersion in water or the *plantón*, in which the prisoner is forced to stand blindfolded for hours facing a wall. These methods—and worse—are the techniques of the dictatorships to the south, yet documented reports by Amnesty International, the Catholic Church, various Colombian medical associations and even the Government Coroner's Office show that they have been used in Colombia. Nor did previous Governments invoke the national security theories in vogue in South America's military regimes. According to the Turbay Government, common crime, narcotics trafficking, guerrilla activities and social protest form part of the same subversive conspiracy. It is a convenient argument, because so long as there is common crime, there can be no lifting of the state of siege, but it also happens to be the argument of the repressive Governments of Chile, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina.

Gen. José Joaquín Matallana, the former head of D.A.S., Colombia's equivalent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and a law-and-order man if there ever was one, questioned the whole security argument by publicly speculating on the real aims of the M-19, whose arms robbery last January was the immediate justification for round-ups by the military. He said that D.A.S. investigations of the M-19 had revealed a complex organization that could accommodate both right- and left-wing extremists, and indeed, some of the group's publicly recognized leaders earlier belonged to the right-wing populist movement of the former dictator, Rojas Pinilla. Matallana suggested that the M-19 could have been sponsored and financed by a military government in the continent's Southern Cone to provoke "serious disorders to give the sensation that the country is facing a severe security threat in order to create conditions appropriate for a dictatorial government."

Whatever the truth, there is no doubt that Colombia's extreme left shares the myopia of the extreme right: both desire a military dictatorship. The guerrillas believe a repressive regime will set the stage for revolution, an outdated theory in Latin America, where military governments have proved their staying power (it took the Sandinists forty-three years to overthrow the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua). The right believes that a military government will restore law and order, yet statistics show a rising crime rate in such established dictatorships as Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay and a corresponding growth in government corruption. Left or right, these Colombians have had no personal experience of a modern military government, as in Chile, their only reference being the flabby, old-fashioned dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla. Nor do they count the cost in human suffering. As Lleras Restrepo succinctly put it, in his criticism of the progressive militarization of Colombia, the end does not justify

the means. The security statute "is not going to do away with the independent republics of the marijuana, cocaine and emerald smugglers or the kidnapping industry. For many people it solves nothing but, on the contrary, is a severe attack on democratic liberties."

As the Conservative leader, J. Emilio Valderrama, has pointed out, the use of state-of-siege powers for more than three decades has created a vicious circle of legal repression. Theoretically, the statutes decreed by a President under a state of siege temporarily replace existing laws and cease to have force once the siege is lifted. In fact, the body of extraordinary law built up over the years is so extensive that no President has dared govern without such powers. Thus, the temporary decrees become permanent ones. Moreover, the President alone decides what conditions constitute an "internal commotion" justifying the invocation of a state of siege without reference to Congress. López Michelsen used a strike by Government health workers; Turbay invokes the narcotics traffic. Yet neither was intended in the original constitutional phrase "internal commotion," which was interpreted to mean a nationwide uprising. The logical consequence of this process, says Valderrama's Conservative colleague Vásquez Carrizosa, is that "all social conflict becomes subversive activity."

The one obstacle preventing the closing of the circle is the Supreme Court, which can and does show its independence by striking down legislation that it finds unconstitutional. Now, however, Congress is studying a judicial reform that will politicize the courts and cost them their independence. Supreme Court justices will be elected by Congress from lists of Conservatives and Liberals prepared by the President, and judges of the lower courts by a new Superior Judicial Council instead of by the Supreme Court. The Council of State, composed of members of the President's Cabinet, will absorb still other functions of the Supreme Court. In return for Congressional acquiescence, the Government has promised to abolish the security statute and lift the state of siege, if only temporarily. The judiciary and the legal profession are adamantly opposed to the reform. They do not believe the Government's claim that it will make Colombian justice more efficient, any more than military courts have proved more efficient than civilian ones in dispatching "subversives"—and with considerably fewer guarantees since the arresting officer is often the judge. But as Turbay dominates the Congress, there is a good chance the reform will pass.

With the courts out of the way, there will remain only one voice, that of the press. Radio and television are already prohibited from broadcasting any news or commentary relating to public disturbances or strikes. In the first six months after the security statute was decreed, twenty-three radio stations were proscribed and a number of journalists arrested. Most of the press practices a form of self-censorship, but thanks to a Supreme Court ruling protecting the newspapers, a few still insist on telling both sides of the story, most notably *El Espectador*, a dissident Liberal Party newspaper with the largest circulation in the country and impeccable establishment credentials. *El Espectador* was

among the first to reveal documented cases of torture, but as the shocked newspaper observed in an editorial, "We could not believe it in the beginning."

As has become clear from reports in *El Espectador*, it is "a crime to hold an opinion." When the country's traditionally conservative Catholic bishops expressed concern about the security statute, particularly when used to suppress the poor, Justice Minister Escobar Sierra accused them of "promoting extremist groups." Andrés Holguín, a respected former attorney general, was similarly censured by the armed forces for deploring military violence. According to the military, critics such as Holguín are "disfiguring reality and stimulating the friends of subversion." There was also mention of "cultural subversion," meaning the intellectual and artistic community. Retorting that there was no such conspiracy, Holguín said, "We are not going to keep quiet or refrain from expressing our opinions publicly because we represent the living conscience of our country, probably the only vigilant one it has left." In a similar vein, the Antioquia state legislature complained that "many people are detained and tortured just because they hold a contrary opinion or happen to be an acquaintance of someone accused of subversion." Sometimes the connection is even less clear, as in the case of two Jesuits who were arrested because of letters supposedly smuggled to them from jail by a Colombian charged with belonging to a left-wing group. The man later testified that he had never written the letters, the Jesuits never received them, and the contents published in the pro-Government press were patently fake. Nevertheless, the justice minister claimed that the priests "were not detained because of their pretty faces" and that "there is clear evidence implicating the two Jesuits."

A more likely reason for the priests' arrest was their work among the Bogotá poor (twenty-seven members of the religious group's slum cooperative also were arrested). Case after case has shown that the principal victims of the military crackdown are impoverished workers and peasants or organizations dedicated to their defense. Earlier this year, for example, the vice president of the executive committee of the Regional Indigenous Committee of Cauca, the core of the country's Indian movement, was assassinated, the organization's president and his brother arrested, and the committee's headquarters searched. In Boyaca in central Colombia, where conditions border on the feudal, a young agrarian leader was arrested on subversion charges because he served as the go-between for the purchase of some land by a peasant community, even though the owner of the land publicly testified to his good character.

The slightest hint of protest is met with the threat of the security statute. The director of Bogotá's maternity clinic, for instance, invoked the statute in an ultimatum to the hospital union to remove signs from the clinic walls about a strike that had been settled. Similarly, the Mayor of Puerto Boyaca used the security statute to sack the administration's chief accountant because he refused to authorize certain expenses. On the Caribbean coast, the state government of Atlántico warned the region's mayors that participants in civic protests against lack of water or public transportation

could be detained for up to one year under the security law.

But force cannot prevent the cauldron from boiling. There have been numerous strikes and demonstrations against the security statute and sharp rises in the cost of such basic consumer items as milk, even though these protests are illegal. Frequently they are put down by the military, but the next week there are more protests, in still other neighborhoods or cities. In the defense minister's opinion, the solution is to "reinforce" the security statute. Others, such as Lozano Simonelli, believe the only answer is to form new political movements that will respond to the needs of the people and seek a redistribution of national wealth. "Where is Colombia headed," wonders Vásquez Carrizosa, "with this Kafkaesque vision of judicial terror that never existed among us before? To what extent has our country absorbed the national security theories of the anti-democratic regimes in South America?"

A decade ago, the Hudson Institute predicted that Colombia would be one of only four Latin American nations to attain membership in the industrialized nations' club by the end of the century (along with Mexico, Venezuela and Brazil). But the way things are going, it is unlikely the country will achieve that distinction, except at the cost of a majority of its people. It is a tragic prospect for a nation whose citizens held so much promise, in the labor movement and business community that looked beyond the coffee groves to create diverse industries, in the innovating professional classes and the honorable judges and, yes, even some politicians. Now, all are overshadowed by the iron fist. □

## ■ OCTOPUS OF BENEVOLENCE

# United Way— Cornering the Charity Dollar

TIMOTHY SAASTA

A year ago last spring a judge in Los Angeles issued a rather curious ruling, ordering that city's United Way to *accept* nearly a million dollars in charitable contributions. Considering how much one hears about the financial plight of American charities, the United Way's rejection of so much money may seem incongruous at best. But United Way had its reasons, and understanding them will shed a bit of light on the controversy erupting about an organization that has been called the "A.T.&T. of charity."

The million dollars United Way didn't want was money raised by Associated In-group Donors (A.I.D.), an

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organization that solicits contributions primarily from employees and then distributes the money to numerous local charities. Since that is precisely what United Way does, the two organizations were competitors. They coexisted, though not always peacefully, for twenty-five years until United Way officials decided that Los Angeles should be like the rest of the country and have but one general-purpose fund-raising organization. To realize that objective, United Way used some tactics straight out of J.P. Morgan's repertory.

**T**he first step was to cut off A.I.D.'s source of funds. To do that, United Way began to wield some of its considerable influence in corporate board rooms, requesting that corporations (and government agencies) that had been allowing A.I.D. to solicit their employees stop doing so. More than 180 of them agreed, and in one year A.I.D.'s income plummeted from \$18 million to less than \$8.5 million.

United Way's second step was to cut off A.I.D. from many of the recipients of its money. To do that, it sent a memorandum to all of its member agencies warning them that, if they accepted any money from A.I.D., their United Way funding would be stopped. Since their United Way contributions were considerably larger, 189 charities had no choice but reluctantly to refuse A.I.D. money. One agency, however, joined with A.I.D. to file a suit, which A.I.D.'s lawyer, an antitrust specialist who has sued Ford, General Motors and OPEC, called "the most classic case I've ever seen." In a court-initiated settlement, United Way agreed to allow its agencies to accept A.I.D. funds and to curtail efforts to eliminate its rival. The incident is but the most egregious example of what United Way's increasingly vociferous critics say is a concerted effort by that organization to expand its virtual monopoly over on-the-job charitable fund raising. The issue is important because workplace solicitation is by far the most lucrative and efficient technology for raising money ever devised, and access to efficient ways of raising money has become a foremost concern of inflation-stricken charities.

But United Way's domination of on-the-job giving is not the only issue that concerns the critics, about fifty of whom (including such groups as the Gray Panthers, the National Council of La Raza, and the Public Citizen) co-sponsored a meeting last April in Dallas on alternatives to the United Way. One of the strongest complaints is that, despite United Way's ubiquitous claim that it "works for all of us," United Way funding only partially supports a small percentage of all charities (estimated at 4 to 15 percent) and only those that work in a limited number of fields (particularly recreation and family service), with the same charities getting essentially the same amounts year after year. Also, minority and women's groups contend that few of the funded charities are run by minorities or women. Non-United Way agencies say that too many people from the agencies that receive funds are on the committees that decide who gets what. Community activists see too many business people on those committees, worrying that United Way's attachments to the corporate world greatly affect its approaches to social

problems. Journalists report a lack of openness.

There's more. Many employees complain of being coerced to make donations, and say that giving the "united way" is too impersonal. Some people from local United Ways (which function as autonomous organizations) are unhappy about the increasing power and income of the national United Way. And a few critics, citing United Way's involvement in helping distribute government funds in some communities, its aggressive campaign to bring in as members such publicly popular charities as the American Cancer Society, and its ambitious ten-year plan to triple its income, claim that deep within United Way's headquarters in Alexandria, Va., is a vision of the United Way becoming the unifier and spokesperson for all of American charity.

Unification is the essential characteristic of the 2,300 local United Ways, each of which raises funds to be distributed to various charities that have been accepted as members. To get the money, those charities must forsake many of their own fund-raising campaigns. This makes business people happy. It was the proliferation of such campaigns—and the disruption of office routine they were causing—that led a group of Cleveland businessmen to form the earliest modern predecessor of United Way in 1913.

But the unified-charity-drive idea wasn't the only key to United Way's success; another was raising money at the workplace. Borrowing a technique used by creditors, United Way goes directly to the source of most people's money—the paycheck. And, borrowing another principle from the world of credit, it urges employees to have a little deducted from each paycheck. Such gifts are more than three times larger on the average than contributions that come directly out of one's pocket. (Employee contributions now account for 61 percent of United Way's annual \$1.3 billion income, with another 28 percent coming in direct gifts from corporations.)

The other great advantage of workplace soliciting is that you can approach a lot of people at one time, which not only reduces the cost of asking for money but generates peer (and, sometimes, employer) pressure to give, particularly since the person doing the soliciting is a fellow employee trained by United Way. Because of its low overhead operation, so to speak, United Way's fund-raising cost is only between 4 and 6 percent, compared with costs of 25 to 50 percent or more for some other types of fund raising. The problem is that United Way would love to keep its fund-raising invention for its exclusive use. So far it has succeeded: nearly 90 percent of local United Ways solicit without competition. United Way's virtual monopoly is called unfair and unproductive by its critics, who cite statistics showing that in five of the six cities where there has been competition (from fund-raising federations called Combined Health Agency Drives), United Way was not hurt, and overall donations increased significantly.

United Way replies to its critics that employers want the monopoly because they fear that multiple campaigns will disrupt the workplace. But the experience of the handful of companies that have given their employees a choice is that such campaigns can be done easily and cheaply (two ex-

amples are T.R.W. Space and Defense Systems Group and California's Crocker National Bank). And although United Way claims that its monopoly is solely the result of employers' desires, wherever its exclusive access has been challenged, United Way has struck back aggressively, the Los Angeles case cited above being but one example. The critics also point to United Way's Corporate Development Program headed by American Telephone and Telegraph board chairman John DeButts, an attempt to corral the major corporations into agreeing to exclusive United Way campaigns in all their offices and plants. By the end of 1978, United Way had secured commitments from 106 *Fortune* 500 companies employing 3.2 million people.

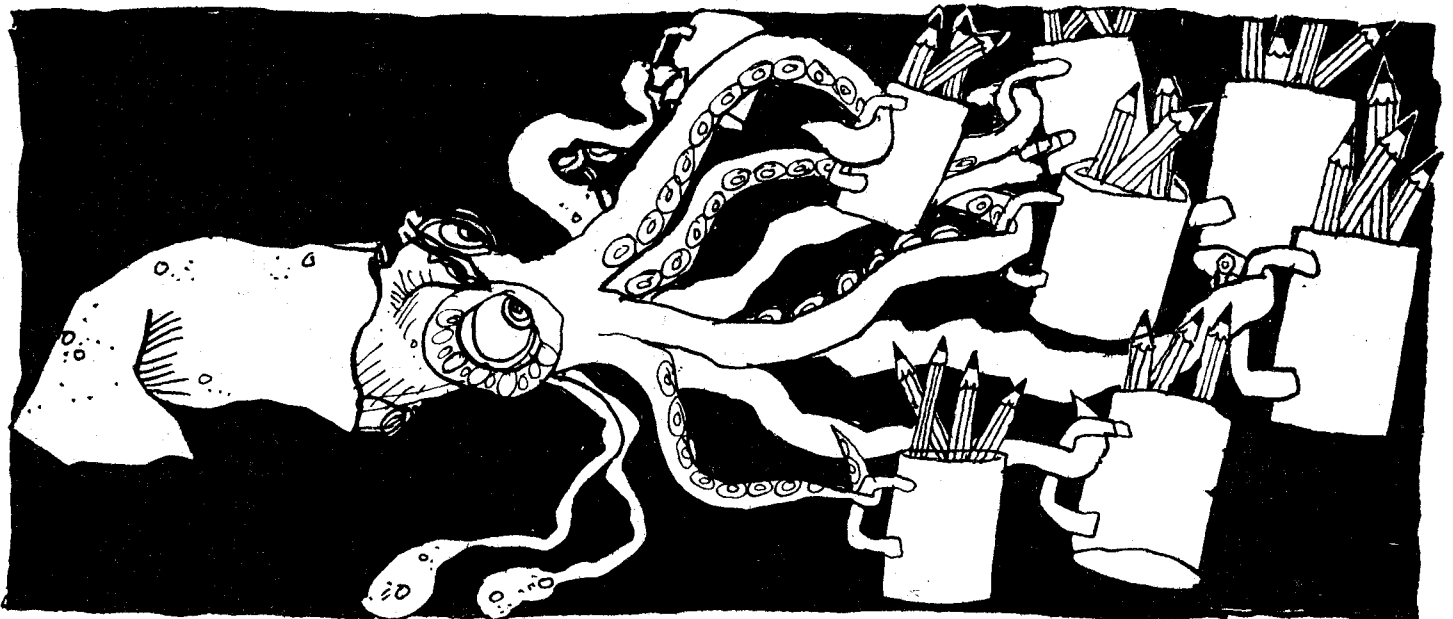
United Way officials deny any hegemonistic ambitions, pointing out that local United Ways are open to all groups and controlled by volunteers in the community. If a charity wants to become a part of United Way, it need merely apply. "We in United Way are always searching for ways to respond to the struggling new agencies that are often the catalysts in the voluntary sector," is how United Way's head, William Aramony, put it in the national organization's 1978 annual report. United Way's own statistics, however, present quite a different picture. An average of only 1.5 new agencies were funded in 1978 by each of 294 of the largest United Ways, a tiny number considering that dozens of new charities are started each year in every one of those cities. And the few new charities admitted usually receive minuscule portions of the money. In Minneapolis, for example, the sixteen agencies that had been admitted between 1967 and 1977 received collectively only 6 percent of United Way funding (or approximately one-half the allocation for the Red Cross), according to *The Minneapolis Tribune*.

This raises another question: how much do United Way's allocations to its own members change over time? "One of the things I feel best about is what United Ways are doing to keep their programs responsive to their community's changing needs," wrote United Way's (and Monsanto's) board chairman, John Hanley, in United Way's 1978 report. Once

again, however, the facts do not square with the claims. The average change in allocations to the forty largest recipients of United Way money is only one-fifth of a percent per year, according to a 1974 study done by Boston College sociologist David Horton Smith for the Commission on Private Philanthropy and Public Needs. In Minneapolis, for example, ten agencies that received 53 percent of the money from the Minneapolis United Way in 1967 received 52 percent of it in 1977. United Way contends that established agencies often change their programs. But, as the authors of *The Minneapolis Tribune* series wrote, "Directors of United Way agencies admit that they describe old programs differently to meet new priorities. The directors also say that they shift requests for United Way money from low-priority to high-priority programs, leaving their overall mix unchanged."

Because United Way's allocations change so slowly, say the critics, United Way has not really responded to the profound changes that have occurred in the voluntary sector during the past decade and a half—the burgeoning civil rights, women's, environmental and consumer movements. Even Hanley, United Way's 1978 national chairman, acknowledged recently that the groups "who feel left out" may be "closer to genuine emerging needs." United Way's lack of support for minority-run organizations is particularly troubling to its critics. United Way claims that as much as a third of its funds benefit minorities, a figure that many blacks, such as Walter Bremond, head of the rival National Black United Fund, scoff at. But coming up with a more precise figure is nearly impossible.

Last January, the Santa Clara County Human Relations Commission, investigating complaints made by a coalition called Minorities for a Fair Share, did determine that the local United Way's varying claims that between 30 and 50 percent of its money benefited minorities were "unsupported" and "misleading." The commission found that, in a county with 26 percent minority population, only 4 percent of United Way's allocations went to minority-run or-



ganizations. The commission concluded that United Way funding for minorities promotes "paternalism and a dependency attitude." Many women also feel shortchanged. Figures compiled by women's groups for at least three major cities show that United Way provides a much larger percentage of the budgets of male-serving agencies (such as the Boy Scouts) than of female-serving agencies.

**T**he lack of funding of minority-run and women's groups could well reflect the overwhelmingly white, male composition of United Way's leadership. In Santa Clara, Calif., forty of the forty-four members of United Way's board were white, thirty-nine were men (the figures have changed dramatically since the commission's investigation). And not only are most United Way board members white and male, they are (in the words of a 1978 article in the *Sacramento Bee*) "an inventory of the area's power structure."

United Way is always quick to respond to this criticism, and the typical reply says something about the priorities of the organization. "For United Way to play its role in the community it has to have stature, prestige and power," Warren Dobbs, a former top executive for the Sacramento United Way, explains. Another former Sacramento United Way staff member puts it more bluntly: "Look, it's a mercenary world. The name of the game is bucks, and you want people on your board who can bring in bucks." But then what of the people who actually give most of the bucks? "I would have to say that the donors—the little guys who give to United Way out of their paychecks—really can't feel they're represented," says a businessman active in the Sacramento United Way. "I imagine they haven't the foggiest notion of how their money is cut up [among the charities] and by whom."

The lack of public awareness of what United Ways do with their money also concerns Portland State University Prof. John Walker. "The United Way is the middle class giving to the middle class. It's not really redistribution of resources. . . . I don't object to the idea of United Way as long as they make it very clear that if people want to give to charity, they should go somewhere else." When asked if United Way shouldn't spend more on the truly needy, William Aramony replies: "That kind of needy went out in 1935 with the Social Security Act. In our society today the needs of the poor are largely met by tax responsibility."

In the same interview, Aramony called United Way a "consensus system," a comment that suggests quite a lot about what has happened to the United Ways and what is wrong with having just one, all-inclusive fund-raising federation. For if United Way is a consensus system, it is because that is the only way it can survive, given the many competing interests that must be placated—particularly the interests of member charities. It would seem that those charities would be beholden to United Way, but their public popularity gives them considerable independence. United Way knows that if one of them decided to withdraw, a lot of donations would also be withdrawn. A few years ago in Portland, the Boy

Scouts' ten representatives on United Way's board were able to reverse an unfavorable funding decision, and such situations are not uncommon.

The problem with the consensus system is that policy making becomes more a matter of appeasing competing constituencies than of meeting the needs of the community. A policy of slight variations on what has been done before is the usual result. Stanley Wenocur, a University of Maryland professor who has long been active in United Way, writes that United Way "cannot openly engage in conflict lest it lose supporters, yet it cannot seem to develop the consensus necessary for truly concerted action." The need to avoid conflicts often results in the suppression of anything even remotely controversial. A few years ago in Seattle, for instance, a United Way-funded agency called the Central Seattle Community Council Federation began organizing to oppose a freeway that would have disrupted its neighborhoods. The organization's United Way funding was quickly cut off.

All of this criticism angers many United Way leaders who see the many energetic and concerned people involved and the many individuals who are helped by United Way agencies, at least some of whom are poor or minority. But the question is, how productively is the energy of those United Way volunteers being used? How effectively are those individuals being helped? "One of the tragedies of United Way," says Gray Panther founder Maggie Kuhn, "is that it wastes so much of the energy of people who really do care about their communities."

Certainly United Way's focus is on relieving symptoms rather than on changing the system. Relieving symptoms is important, but there are far more vital roles for the relatively tiny amount of money not subject to governmental control or individual whim (giving by individuals directly to charities accounts for nearly 90 percent of the \$40 billion given away by Americans each year). A former employee of the Phoenix-area Salvation Army (one of the largest recipients of United Way funding) expressed it well: "People would come in the door who live in a state of dire emergency, and we'd give them a dollar a day for food. I realized that that kind of emergency relief was just a stop-gap measure and it still is." A related issue is control. Few United Way agencies are controlled by or even listen to the people who understand the problem most intimately—those who are being helped. One result is that most United Way programs, like most government programs, reflect basic misunderstandings about what a community needs and how to provide it. Then there is the age of many of United Way agencies. Seventy-two-year-old Maggie Kuhn sees the parallels between aging institutions and aging individuals. "When I first started working for the Y.W.C.A. in the 1920s," she says, "it was a very different organization. It was innovating. It was concerned about social justice for women. But over the years it became larger and more bureaucratic and more cautious and more and more removed from the real needs of those it was supposed to be helping. Organizations get into habits just as people do, and eventually they ossify."

Her thoughts are remarkably similar to those of the United Way's former chairman Hanley. Warning that "the future can pass right by us," Hanley said that what United Ways need is "continuous change—a perpetual process of self-examination and self-renewal." Continuous change requires some kind of continuous ferment to overcome the inertia that infects so many organizations, but the pressures on United Ways induce caution and timidity. The chief force that has helped many American institutions overcome inertia—competition—is one thing United Ways lack. Opening up workplace solicitation to more charities would provide a little of that competition. But even more important, it would provide an urgently needed source of support for the many types of charities that are almost never funded by United Ways.

How can it happen? The three strategies most favored by the organizations that met in Dallas last April were: persuading more businesses and governments to allow their employees to designate gifts to any legally recognized charity; forming fund-raising federations of a variety of local organizations now excluded from the United Way, and creating national fund-raising federations of groups working in a particular field (the environment) or with certain groups of people (women, Chicanos). Up until now there has been a tremendous amount of dissatisfaction with United Way, but it has never had any focus. If it is focused, a recent article in *The New York Times* concluded, private charity "may be in for a major upheaval." □

## SEMANTICS AND SUBSTANCE

# Doing the Carter Shuffle

JOSEPH GUSFIELD

Words, said Thomas Hobbes, are the counters of wise men but they are the money of fools. The words that Jimmy Carter and his staff use to describe their deeds are a good clue to what is not said, what is hidden and what deeds are not done. Governments exist in the ceremonial uses of language as well as in the presence or absence of acts. As America gained the rank of a superpower, the Department of War became the Department of Defense. In such ways politicians seek to invoke among audiences dispositions and attitudes that escape their power to command by other resources. Describing Carter's recent Cabinet shuffles and reshuffles as "resignations" is the latest case in point. It reveals some of the trials, tribulations and limits to the Presidency in the late 1970s in the United States.

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"Resignation" is a term much in use in parliamentary systems of government where cabinet officials, usually supported by a political constituency and a record of electoral successes, express their conflict with the prime minister by noisy exits. In another form, prime ministers or premiers faced with a loss of parliamentary confidence resign and precipitate a new election. In both cases resigning is part of a confrontation of policies and heightens political tensions by putting an issue into the forefront of the public agenda. For the parliamentary cabinet official, resignation is an act of heroism—a political risk and a political opportunity.

All this clearly contrasts with the air of failure or disgrace that clings to resignation in the American political context. The cases of Spiro Agnew and Richard Nixon show the act of resigning as the last resort before open eviction. That connotation of disgrace is certainly missing in the Carter-engineered resignations of Joseph Califano, W. Michael Blumenthal, Brock Adams and James Schlesinger. Having asked for a *pro forma* resignation of his entire Cabinet, the President's acceptance of some and rejection of others looks more like dismissal than either Agnew's leave-taking in disgrace or Henry Wallace's departure from the Truman Administration over foreign policy differences.

What is being presented, however distorted, by calling these acts "resignations"? With no hint of scandal or dereliction, the Secretaries of Health, Education and Welfare, of the Treasury, of Transportation and of Energy were described as if they were locked in a fierce quarrel with President Carter over fundamental questions of programmatic goals and methods. (The "resignation" of Attorney General Griffin Bell was apparently more of a "retirement," his intention and desire to return to private life having been long known.) Like Caesar, they were all seen as honorable men whose failure to be part of the team was a matter of commitment to another cause, a different drummer. Perhaps we may even now see the winds of open conflict fan issues into public awareness and debate. Maybe even Washington has its Winston Churchills and its Charles de Gaulles, who will thunder defiance from exile.

Yet the image of parliamentary politics was belied by the absence of political confrontations. There were no clear statements of policy differences by either the President or the Secretaries. There was no sense of late meetings in the White House at which arguments had been set out and rebutted; no programs and counterprograms declared. The word "resignation" dangles over these exits, torn loose from the context it conjures up. The term suggests that there was a clear and consistent set of policies enunciated by the White House for Cabinet members to follow. Choosing not to follow, they also chose to resign. The underlying assumption was that a Presidential program and a direction existed from which these Cabinet ministers dissented. For only those who commit themselves to principles can have principled opposition.

But it is equally plain that these events had been more like dismissals than resignations. Rather than emerging as heroic defenders of ideological or political commitments,

the former Secretaries were presented as "poor soldiers" unwilling to carry out orders, or else defective administrators unable to manage their bailiwicks. In either case, they were merely deficient team players, and their ejections a matter of administrative cleanliness. The glories and the political opportunities of resignation in the parliamentary system are hardly available to this style of exit. We cannot say of them, to paraphrase Shakespeare, that "nothing became them in office so much as the leaving of it."

The whole drama of resignation-dismissal is then a two-leveled affair. As resignation, its message is that the President has a course which it is possible to oppose as people do who are discussing weighty and serious matters, thinking about them and achieving a resolution in the form of committed positions. Now the President, having shuffled the deck, is ready to deal. As dismissal, it presents the Presidency in a slightly different light, but the appearance of a leadership that has grasped the problems resolutely is still maintained. The major problems besetting the Administration are seen to be administrative—getting the executive branch to work together and to do so effectively. Under great pressures to respond to exigent crises of energy, oil shortage, inflation and the fear of unemployment, the President faces a dismal task. Either he has no answers or, if he has, he cannot mobilize the power to discipline private groups or Congressional leadership. In either event, what he can do is to react *as if* the problems were solvable as matters of management, of getting the right people into the right executive places. The facade is again there that the President has a map, knows where he is going and only the mutiny of the crew keeps him from reaching shore.

The Young affair is instructive in its difference from the other Cabinet resignations. Although Andrew Young's resignation as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations occurred in the same month as did the others, it was prompted neither by Presidential intention nor by a *pro forma* request. It had much more in common with parliamentary actions

than with the political institutions of American Government. Like several other past United Nations Ambassadors from the United States, such as Adlai Stevenson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Young is a man with his own political constituency and his own popularity. The use of the U.N. position for this kind of figure—too powerful to be ignored and also too powerful for the Cabinet—builds in its conflict with State Department aims and procedures. The precipitation of conflict may even be politically useful to the former Ambassador. Certainly Young's resignation raised the level of political confrontations and moved the issue of Middle East policy onto a new track. In this is a great difference between Young and the other Cabinet members, who were so ceremoniously shown the door. He went out with a bang; they with a whimper.

Responding to political issues by displays of administrative skill is hardly new for American governmental executives. Unlike Britain and some other European countries, the American political scene is one of loose, unregulated political parties, held together, if at all, largely by the hope of victory and the fear of defeat. This is understandable in a country with so many semipermanent tensions between so many divergent groups—regional, class, industrial, ethnic and racial. Always on the edge of irreconcilable conflicts, we have learned to minimize conflict, to pretend it is nonexistent. I remember a *New Yorker* cartoon some years ago in which an older minister is instructing a younger one, saying, "Now you'll get along fine if you avoid two topics—politics and religion." Indeed, the great motto of American politics is still Sam Rayburn's: To get along, go along.

The situation of a weakened Presidency in a time of acute national troubles makes it even more likely that problems are presented as administrative within the facade of committed political resignations. Carter, like Gerald Ford, has had to face the constraints of limited power. His election was not the result of any great upsurge of voter enthusiasm. His showing in the primaries represented a small segment of the eventual electorate and his plurality was seldom more than



his combined opposition. Carter's victory was slim and regionally narrow. Congress, after Watergate and Vietnam, has its agendas, and finds Carter's coattails more burden than help.

All this might not be so productive of Presidential despair if the questions facing the nation were less critical or less resistant to clear solutions. The current criticism of Presidential leaderlessness is like the tactic of "resignation" itself; it substitutes show for substance. The issues of oil shortages and stagflation have not produced any effective resolutions, nor can a weakened Presidency be expected to take bold measures. The awful realization exists that there is no program, no answer, no resolution that inspires the confidence of the White House or could be salable to an undisciplined Congress and a distrustful public.

In this situation, the President becomes a say-soother. He gives us the image of political debate and the simulacrum of solutions. He tries to create the illusion of both political commitment and effective management. Unlike Young, the deposed have taken adversity like "good soldiers" with only a modest amount of carping before they depart into yesterday's headlines. Lacking a constituency to echo the ring of conviction and keep alive the substance of political conflict, they have little recourse to anything else. Thus, the Carter Administration endeavors to maintain the illusion that there are no major issues, only bad managers.

Such governmental stagecraft is one of the ways in which contemporary governments try to gain support in a nation of mass communications and deep distrust of its supposed leaders. But symbolic politics has its limits too. It will neither put gas in the tank nor stop the inflationary climb. The vacuum that constitutes current American politics and government is not likely to be filled solely by imagination. The Carter Administration will have to come up with some substantial answers to our substantial questions if Jimmy Carter is to pluck a flower from his current thorny mess. □

## Conspiracy

*(Continued From Front Cover)*

Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August of that year. "A successful prosecution of this type," he pointed out, "would be a unique achievement for the Bureau and should seriously disrupt and curtail the activities of the New Left."

We were also unaware that Judge Hoffman, a tiny waspish septuagenarian whose acerbic and often witty tongue made up for his lack of stature, had been programmed early by the prosecution to expect the worst from the eight political activists who were eventually indicted—Black Panther chairman Bobby Seale; Dave Dellinger, a longtime militant pacifist; Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden, two of the

leading lights of Students for a Democratic Society; Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, co-founders of the Youth International Party, and John Froines and Lee Weiner, university professor and student respectively. After weeks of pretrial indoctrination, Judge Hoffman was thoroughly convinced that he would shortly be confronted by a group of wild men who would turn his courtroom into what one Government official characterized as a "Roman circus." Shortly before the trial began, Judge Hoffman was listening to *CBS News* in his chambers one late afternoon and heard Walter Cronkite announce that the Chicago Eight, as they soon came to be known, did not expect to be treated fairly by him. The judge sat bolt upright and hissed, "I'll show them how prejudiced I can be!"—not realizing that his secretary, who had been taking dictation from him just before the broadcast began, had forgotten to turn off her tape recorder.

For months before the trial, the judge and Thomas A. Foran, the United States Attorney and a protégé of Mayor Richard Daley, had been collaborating on a scheme to hold all of the defendants as well as their attorneys in contempt. On April 14, 1969, Marlin W. Johnson, the Special Agent in Charge (S.A.C.) of the F.B.I.'s Chicago office, reported to Hoover that Foran had "confidentially advised that he had talked with trial judge Julius Hoffman and strongly feels that, subsequent to the trial . . . the defendants and their lawyers may well be held in contempt because of their behavior and public statements prior to and during the trial." The next day, Johnson told Hoover that Foran had requested "a continuous flow of information concerning public statements by the defendants . . . to show possible contempt of court before, during and after the trial by the defendants and their lawyers." Two weeks after the trial had begun, the S.A.C. informed the Director that "Judge Hoffman has indicated in strictest confidence that, following the trial, he definitely plans to consider various individuals for possible contempt of court."

The judge and the prosecutor were also working closely together on another tack. They had concluded that, as one F.B.I. report put it, "the defendants will claim on appeal of any conviction . . . that [they] could not receive a fair trial due to the publicity surrounding the trial." On October 7, 1969, S.A.C. Johnson sent an airtel to Hoover expressing the concern of Hoffman and Foran in this regard and recommending that "Judge Hoffman and U.S.A. Foran must be in a position to prove that the publicity was caused by the defendants, their lawyers, and their associates rather than the government."

Several weeks later, Chief Judge William J. Campbell, who apparently served as a faithful conduit between Hoffman and the F.B.I., called Johnson early one morning. He told the agent "in strictest confidence that Judge Hoffman . . . may call a mistrial and send all defendants and their attorneys to jail for contempt for six months." The proceedings, Campbell hastened to add, would start up again the day after the contempt sentences had been completed.

The collaboration between the F.B.I., Campbell and

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Hoffman reached its zenith on December 2, 1969, two months into the trial, when the defense attempted to serve Hoover with a subpoena requiring him to produce all documents under his control relating to "the electronic or physical surveillance" by the Bureau of the defendants, their families, friends and supporters. We had decided to seek such a subpoena after the prosecution had, with glacial celerity, grudgingly admitted that it had "discovered" some illegal F.B.I. wiretaps involving at least five of the defendants, the contents of which it refused to reveal to them or their attorneys. Chief Judge Campbell immediately assured S.A.C. Johnson that he "will insure that the subpoena is quashed . . . at [the] appropriate time." Campbell then contacted Judge Hoffman, who promptly quashed the subpoena, thus depriving the defendants of a great deal of helpful evidence, including the fact that some of Bobby Seale's telephone calls to his attorneys during the trial had been intercepted.

While we never knew that the two judges were conferring secretly with the F.B.I., the prosecution and each other, we did begin to have strong suspicions that Hoffman and Foran were, at least sporadically, talking together about the case. For instance, we noticed that whenever the judge was late, Foran and his chief assistant, Richard G. Schultz, would enter the courtroom just as Hoffman was materializing on the bench. On one such occasion, I could not resist rising to my feet and saying, "Your Honor, we just noticed that both the Court and the United States Attorney came almost simultaneously after we waited here until 2:30, and I think that perhaps the defense would be entitled to an explanation." Hoffman's answer was to warn me, "Don't keep track of my time, sir. I will keep track of yours, but don't you keep track of mine." All I could muster in response was a lame, "Well, that seems equitable."

The judge was not even above having secret communications with the jury while it was deliberating. Several months after the trial had ended, we discovered, through a magazine article based on interviews with some of the jurors, that one or two notes had been sent by the panel to Hoffman and that he had responded to them through a Federal marshal. At a hearing held in November 1970, eight jurors recalled a message informing the judge that "the jury [is] unable to reach a verdict," while three remembered a second note which was similar in content. They also testified that the marshal had said something like, "Remember the judge's instructions," or "This is your duty," or "It's been a long trial, you can't expect to come to a verdict so soon." Two years later, an appellate court was to label Hoffman's failure to reveal these notes to us as "grounds for reversal."

We also surmised that the F.B.I. was probably listening to everything we had to say to one another. On April 9, 1969, shortly after the defendants' arraignments in Chicago, two agents with sophisticated electronic equipment were discovered hovering outside a conference room in the Federal Building where we were having a strategy meeting. An emergency motion for a protective order to prevent any future episodes of this sort was quickly denied by Hoffman, and S.A.C. Johnson gleefully notified Hoover that the local at-

torney who had argued on behalf of the defendants looked like "a quivering bowl of jelly."

Still, with all our knowledgeable assumptions about the ways of the Bureau, we were profoundly shocked when, some eight years after the trial had ended, we came into possession of a number of official documents, most through Jerry Rubin's Freedom of Information Act demand, which indicated that our key legal defense meetings had indeed been infiltrated or bugged. On March 27, 1969, the Chicago Police Department telephoned Schultz to inform him that there had been a meeting of the defendants' lawyers in New York City and what plans had been formulated at it. A little more than a week later, the same agency gave Schultz the substance of our proposed strategy for the arraignments. Although legally bound to disclose such reports to Judge Hoffman and the defense counsel, the assistant prosecutor chose not to do so.

On March 6, 1970, several weeks after the verdicts acquitting the defendants of the conspiracy charges but convicting Hoffman, Rubin, Delinger, Davis and Hayden of individual violations of the anti-riot act, the Newark office of the F.B.I. sent an urgent coded telex to Hoover. This wire recapitulated all of the decisions we had made the day before at a legal conference in Newark called to plan our various appeals. The message even quoted the warning of one of the attorneys present, Prof. Arthur Kinoy of Rutgers University Law School, that our appellate strategy must be kept secret or it would "lose its punch."

Not even our mail had been overlooked. On October 1, 1969, with obvious tongue in cheek, Chicago notified Hoover, again in a coded telex, that it was in possession of some eighteen letters that were addressed to our defense office at 28 East Jackson Boulevard. "It is impossible to accurately speculate as to the nature of this matter," the message stated. "However, it appears most logical that this mail was misdelivered to some other company at 28 East Jackson Boulevard, which opened same, and then forwarded to F.B.I. rather than Post Office Department." After a discussion with United States Attorney Foran, it was decided to turn the intercepted mail over to the local postal inspector.

In addition, the Bureau suppressed a great deal of evidence that might have exonerated the defendants in the jury's eyes. When Norman Mailer testified for the defense, he stated that, on the night of the main confrontation between convention demonstrators and the police, he had witnessed the latter "chasing and 'chopping up' demonstrators with night sticks" from a vantage point on the nineteenth floor of the Conrad Hilton Hotel. At the time, he said, he had been "in the company of Gov. John A. Love of Colorado, among others."

The next day, Governor Love was interviewed by Bureau agents in his Denver office. He admitted that he had been present on the nineteenth floor of the Hilton on the night in question and said that he had been able to see the confrontation "clearly" and that the protesters had been compressed

"up against the Hilton Hotel by lines of police moving toward one another from opposite directions on Michigan Avenue." He added that "some individual officers had gone too far . . . the police did not just stand in the street. They did chase demonstrators. They did swing clubs, and they were not gentle in loading arrested demonstrators into police vehicles."

By law, we were entitled to any evidence in the possession of the Government that would tend to prove the innocence of the defendants. One of our main contentions was that what had taken place that night was a "police riot," which was not caused or instigated by any of the Chicago Eight. Governor Love, had we known of his observations, would have been a prestigious and eminently credible witness to help to prove that our version, and not the prosecution's, was the correct one. However, we never learned of the Bureau's interview with him until nine years after the trial and thus did not call him to the stand.

On the trial's first day, the judge rushed us through jury selection in a fashion later declared by a higher court to be unconstitutional. When we realized that we were destined to wind up with a panel of elderly, seemingly conservative people, we decided to end the selection process after Kristi A. King, a young woman scarcely out of her teens, was in the box. We felt that to have one youthful person sitting in judgment upon the defendants was worth giving up our right to challenge any of the other prospective jurors. There were gasps of surprise from the prosecution table when we announced that we would accept the panel "as presently constituted." As far as we were concerned, Ms. King was the entire jury and we sensed that she, at least, would have some understanding of young people, their problems, hopes and life styles.

A few days later, while the initial witness for the Government was still on the stand, the first step in what we came to call "Operation Kristi" took place. After the jury had retired for its usual midmorning recess, Foran rose from his chair and, in the most solemn of tones, informed the judge that he had just been told by the F.B.I. that "one of the jurors . . . or her family had received a letter that certainly would be of a threatening nature. . . ." The letter, which he had in his hand, read, "You are being watched," and was signed "The Black Panthers." He stated that the identical letter had also been received by Ms. Ruth Peterson, another juror.

We were certain that the F.B.I. had sent the two letters in order to frighten Ms. King off the jury. The one to Ms. Peterson, we were convinced, was intended to allay the obvious suspicions that would have arisen had King been the only recipient. Even though we knew nothing then about the Bureau's longtime practice of writing thousands of anonymous letters to disrupt the activities of civil rights and antiwar protesters (See Kunstler, "Writers of the Purple Page," *The Nation*, Dec. 30, 1978), we felt that Hoover's distaste for such dissidents was so intense that he would stop at little to destroy them.

Hoffman immediately summoned Ms. King from the jury room. After learning that she had never seen the letter in question, he asked her to read it. When she had finished, he



asked, "Having now seen it, will you please tell me whether . . . you can continue to be a fair and impartial juror in this case?" Ashen-faced, the young woman said that she could not and was promptly excused from further service. Ms. Peterson, who had previously seen her letter, assured the court that, since it was her "duty" to be "fair and impartial," she would remain so. When Hoffman asked her if she knew who might have sent the letter, she replied, somewhat prophetically, we thought, that "I don't think anybody did. I think they are trying to play a hoax."

When we asked the judge for a hearing on the origin of the two letters, he angrily denied our application. What we didn't know then was that the prosecution had privately informed him that it wanted "no immediate investigation in connection with the letters." We were certain that the Panthers would never have tried to get rid of a potentially favorable juror after its national chairman had enthusiastically endorsed her selection, a fact that was later verified by an F.B.I. informant in the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party who told his contact agent of the organization's dismay over the letters and its fear of their effect on Seale's chances.

In any event, we lost Kristi King, and her place was soon taken by Kay Richards, the first alternate, who, unbeknownst to us, was the fiancée (now the wife) of one of Mayor Daley's patronage dispensers in Cook County, and who was later to negotiate the compromises among the jurors that made it possible for them to reach any verdicts.

The Government's misconduct continued to the trial's last day when the jury returned its verdicts. Hoover knew of the results even before they were announced in open court. A pliable marshal leaked them to a waiting F.B.I. agent who immediately telephoned Washington that "the main defendants . . . were found guilty on one count." The Director,

after first checking that there was no derogatory information in the files about Schultz, fired off a personal letter to the assistant prosecutor, commending him "for your splendid efforts in connection with the trial of the 'Chicago Seven' [Seale's case had been severed when he insisted on being his own attorney]." No such letter was sent to Foran, possibly because he had provoked Hoover's ire when he had agreed to a pretrial modification of the defendants' travel restrictions that, the Director complained, would "let them run free and loose."

Armed with this and other newly acquired evidence of consistent official misconduct, attorneys for the Center for Constitutional Rights moved last summer to vacate and expunge a handful of remaining contempt convictions against Rubin, Hoffman, Dellinger and myself, and to punish Judges Hoffman and Campbell as well as Foran, Schultz and S.A.C. Johnson for their unlawful collaboration before and during the trial. This motion is still pending, but the main event—the Chicago Conspiracy Trial—ended the day it began a decade ago with the arbitrary arrests of the four defense lawyers who had prepared and argued all pretrial motions. These events signified that the Nixon Administration, in its frenzy to destroy the New Left, was willing to go to any lengths to accomplish that purpose. The Hooverian concept that, if your goals were worthy ones, it little mattered how you achieved them, had now become the watchword of the executive branch, and Watergate was merely the logical extension of that premise.

While everyone connected with the defense never doubted that the Government was fully prepared to go to any limits to convict the Chicago Eight, in the secret recesses of our hearts we could not bring ourselves to believe most of our own rhetoric on this score. The irony of it all was that even our creative imaginations, building on a host of suspicious circumstances, lagged far behind what was really happening. It took us almost ten years to learn that we had seriously understated the nature and extent of the governmental wrongdoing that permeated our case. As I pored over the official documents that laid bare a shocking—and frightening—perversion of the judicial and executive branches, I could only think of Mr. Justice Brandeis's anguished warning a half-century ago, when official lawlessness was presumably the exception and not the rule:

Decency, security and liberty alike demand that government officials shall be subjected to the same rules of conduct that are commands to the citizen. In a government of laws, existence of the government will be imperiled if it fails to observe the law scrupulously. Our government is the potent, the omnipresent teacher. For good or for ill, it teaches the whole people by its example. Crime is contagious. If the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for law; it invites every man to become a law unto himself; it invites anarchy. To declare that in the administration of the criminal law the end justifies the means—to declare that the government may commit crime in order to secure the conviction of a private criminal—would bring terrible retribution. Against this pernicious doctrine this court should resolutely set its face. □

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BARBARA  
GRIZZUTI HARRISON

When I am asked why I do not find Joan Didion appealing, I am tempted to answer—not entirely facetiously—that my charity does not naturally extend itself to someone whose lavender love seats match exactly the potted orchids on her mantle, someone who has porcelain elephant end tables, someone who has chosen to burden her adopted daughter with the name Quintana Roo; I am disinclined to find endearing a chronicler of the 1960s who is beset by migraines that can be triggered by her decorator's having pleated instead of gathered her new dining-room curtains. These, and other assorted facts—such as the fact that Didion chose to buy, at I. Magnin in Beverly Hills, the dress Linda Kasabian wore at the Manson trial—put me more in mind of a neurasthenic Cher than of a writer who has been called America's finest woman prose stylist. (Thinking of Didion's drapes, it occurred to me that in the worst of all possible worlds, Franny Glass might have grown up to be Maria Wyeth of *Play It as It Lays*. Her faith in the Jesus prayer permanently misplaced, possessed of no secular equivalent to fill the vacuum, in her second incarnation Franny is Maria, a fragile madonna of acedia and anomie—a feeling confirmed when I reread all of Didion—an activity which, trust me, is roughly akin to spending several days in the company of Job's comforters.)

I chose first, for no particular reason, to read an essay from *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*: "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream." In this essay, Didion reports, or purports to report, on the murder case of one Lucille Maxwell Miller, who was convicted by the State of California of having killed her husband by dousing him with gasoline

and allowing him to burn to death while he slept in a Volkswagen she had been driving.

Until I sat down to write this essay, I could not, in fact, remember whether Lucille Maxwell Miller had been convicted or acquitted. Now, unlike the heroines of Didion's fiction, I do not regard memory as an affliction; I remember. I remember in part because I have no choice, but also in part because (unlike Didion's heroines, whose fate depends less upon memory and volition than upon selective amnesia), I believe that without memory there is no civilization. To complain ("I am so tired of remembering things") of remembering is to express a wish to be dead, to return to some pre-Edenic state in which good and evil, right and wrong, do not exist. It is a wish to erase, not only one's personal painful past but our collective past—which, in turn, is an invitation to believe that we cannot, individually or collectively, affect the present or the future.

I remember; so why didn't I remember what was surely a salient fact to Lucille Maxwell Miller if not to Ms. Didion? The reason—and I ask you to understand that this is directly related to lavender pillows and matching lavender orchids—is that Didion was not in truth engaged in reporting about Lucille Maxwell Miller; Didion was reporting on Didion's sensibility, which in this essay, as in all her essays, assumes more importance than, say, the existence of the electric chair. What happens in this essay is that Lucille Maxwell Miller is convicted—by Didion—of wearing polyester and Capris, of living in a house with a snack bar and a travertine entry, of speaking in clichés, of having a picture window and a family room and a husband nicknamed Cork, of frequenting the Kapu-Kai Restaurant-Bar and Coffee Shop and of never having eaten an artichoke. Lucille Maxwell Miller's real sin—a truly, as it turned out, mortal one—was to live in a subdivision house in the San Bernardino Valley and to hope to find "the good life" there, instead of in Brentwood Park or Malibu. Unlike those heroines

of Didion's novels, Lucille Maxwell Miller never floated camellias in silver bowls to stave off encroaching madness or corruption—no such exquisite desperation for her; she found a "reasonable little dressmaker" instead. The crime for which Didion indicts Lucille Maxwell Miller is of being tacky—of not, that is, being Didion. This, you see, is where the lavender pillows come in: The body of Lucille Maxwell Miller's husband—burned black—offends Didion less than the fact that Lucille Maxwell Miller wore hair curlers. It isn't Didion's sense of morality that has suffered a blow, it's her sense of style. . . . Which is why, although I have nothing in principle against pretty houses or lavender love seats, Ms. Didion's lyrical *Angst* strikes me as transparently ersatz. What I mean to say is, Didion writes about Lucille Maxwell Miller—and her loyal baby sitter, and her friends, and her admittedly silly lover—as if they were mutants. No; she writes as if her subject were the Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest.

No; in fact, her subject is always herself.

Now that I've gotten that off my chest, I'd like to talk a little about Ms. Didion's highly acclaimed style before I move on to her politics.

Didion's "style" is a bag of tricks. Some of the effects she produces are quite pretty, even momentarily beautiful. But make no mistake: These are tricks—techniques—that can be learned (I don't know why they have evoked so much wonder). If, for example, I put Al Capone and sweet williams in the same sentence, I can be fairly sure that a certain number of readers will be jolted by the juxtaposition—their eyes will cross, and they will assume that they are in the presence of genius. They will be wrong, of course, because unless I use this technique to draw them into meaning, I will have cheated them: A magician can pull a rabbit out of a hat and get away with it; a writer's job is to tell us what the rabbit was doing in the hat in the first place. And, as Didion will gladly acknowledge, she is interested only in the *what* (the "empirical evidence"), not in the *why*.

Didion uses the Capone-sweet williams trick often, sometimes with dazzling effect:

"In the years after Luis was shot

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water hyacinths clogged the culverts at Progresso."

"Hear the doomed children celebrate all things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small." (*Doomed* is the trick word here.)

"Look at the slut on Easter morning. Marin had a straw hat one Easter, and a flowered lawn dress." (Slut/flowered lawn: it works.)

"What makes Iago evil? some people ask. I never ask." (What makes those sentences work? I ask. Cadence, I answer. What do those sentences mean? you may ask. Don't.)

From *Play It as It Lays*: "I used to ask questions, and I got the answer: nothing. The answer is 'nothing.'" As soon as Maria Wyeth ascertains that the answer is "nothing," she segues to "Damson plums, apricot preserves, Sweet India relish and pickled peaches. Apple chutney. Summer squash succotash." That juxtaposition of nihilism with all the ripeness and plenitude of the physical world—the emptiness/cornucopia syndrome—is what passes for style. (Any recital, litany, of fruits, vegetables and old-fashioned flowers is evocative—although, with Didion, we are never sure of what; anyone can learn to do it: read a Burpee catalogue.)

"The acrid string of weeds breaking under them . . . was stronger than all the roses and jasmine gardenias in the whole of Mercy Hospital."

"Alcatraz Island is covered with flowers now: orange and yellow nasturtiums, geraniums, sweet grass, blue iris, black-eyed susans . . . candy tuft. . ."

You see how it works.

Sometimes it doesn't work.

As in: "Carter could not remember the soft down on her spine or he would not have let them put needles there." Carter is Maria's husband, and, in the real world, he would—anyone would—have let "them" put needles in the spine of Maria's retarded child Kate, soft down or no, if he thought the needles would help. I am not being perversely literal-minded. I am concerned here with truth, as well as with fact, and the fact is that Didion is being perversely sentimental, dismissing the truth in order to achieve effect.

(I am also not unaware of the danger of confusing Didion with the narrators of her novels. I am aware of the danger, but I discount it, because the sensibility of her female narrators is indistinguishable from that which informs her essays.)

Her style has been acclaimed as spare, lean. Not so. The emperor is actually wearing more clothes, more finery, than his structure will support. As in (from *A Book of Common Prayer*):

That was August.

Boca Grande is.

Boca Grande was.

Boca Grande shall be.

That is padding—elegant padding, if your taste runs to that sort of thing, but padding nonetheless. It sounds good; it doesn't signify. "World without end, Amen" (from *The Book of Common Prayer*) sounds good—gorgeous—too; but it signifies: We know from the context what we are meant to feel and to understand. When Didion pulls one of her Boca Grande tricks, we are not meant to understand anything (except, perhaps, that even white girls have rhythm).

### Only Disconnect

Here is another kind of trick, a trick used to round off a paragraph or an essay that threatens to be going nowhere. From *The White Album*: "James Jones had known a great simple truth: the Army was nothing more than life itself." Nonsense. Tell it to the Marines. Look hard at that capricious sentence, and it wilts—for the very good reason that there is no truth in it, only contrivance. . . . Actually, as I think about it, it's worse than that: There is just enough truth in that sentence for it to slip by unnoticed. Sentences that contain half-truths should not be allowed to slip by unnoticed. As Didion herself says, "The consciousness of the human organism is carried in its grammar."

"I never expected you to fall back on style as argument," BZ says to (boring) Maria Wyeth just before he dies his curiously antiseptic sleeping-pill death, a death as cool and clean as Ali McGraw's in *Love Story*. Vomit, excrement, the mess attendant upon even this least harsh of suicide methods would have been technically inappropriate for Didion's ending to *Play It as It Lays*:

I know what "nothing" means, and keep on playing.

Why, BZ would say.

Why not I say.

One would be hard-pressed to imagine even self-absorbed Maria uttering these words while lying in BZ's mess—blood on the sheets—in the bed they share while he ends his purposeless (boring) life.

Didion uses style as argument.

Sometimes her tricks appear to be merely cheap, when in fact they are pernicious: "I live in a house in Hollywood in which, during the late thirties and early fifties, a screenwriters' cell of the Communist Party often met." In that house is "a vast Stalinist couch." How does Stalinist deco differ from Trotskyite deco or Leninist deco? one might ask. This is an example of Didion's using style as argument: One cannot imagine her calling attention to a "vast capitalist couch." Style as argument: The house, she says, "suggests the particular vanity of perceiving social life as a problem to be solved by the good will of individuals." Didion uses the "vast Stalinist couch" to illustrate her dearly held belief in the futility of all human endeavor—particularly if it originates from the left.

Her style . . . her eye: About Boca Grande (the inspiration for which is said to be Panama), Grace, the rich narrator, says: "There is poverty here, but it is obdurately indistinguishable from comfort. We all live in cinderblock houses." Oh, no. The eye that sees no difference between the cinderblock houses of the poor and the cinderblock houses of the rich is a cold, voracious one; it is, furthermore, astigmatic. One does not have to have lived in a Central American country (I have), one has only to read *Newsweek* to understand that there are certain very real differences between the cinderblock houses of the rich and the cinderblock houses of the poor. Earthquakes, for example: The esthetically unpleasing cinderblock houses of the poor collapse during earthquakes; the esthetically unpleasing houses of the rich do not. One assumes that that is a matter of some concern to those who live therein. (One might also mention plumbing. Didion does not.) I don't want you to think I am belaboring this; you may argue that Grace/Didion is being ironic when she compares the cinderblock houses of the poor to the cinderblock houses of the rich. That defense won't play: For irony to be effective, it has to start from a definable and recognizable moral base (think for a moment of Evelyn Waugh, and, whether you accept his moral premises or not, you will understand immediately the point I am trying to make); irony lacks pungency as well as passion if it lacks context and does not draw us into meaning.

Didion makes it a point of honor not

to struggle for meaning. (I have yet to meet anyone who has offered a satisfactory explanation for the first and last sentences of *A Book of Common Prayer*: "I will be her witness." "I have not been the witness I wanted to be." Witness to what? one asks. (Some ask. I no longer ask.) I do not require that a novelist eradicate all mystery, which is in any case impossible: Think of Graham Greene, who tells us everything we need to know about his characters; we are still left with a sense of the ineffable, and no one can quarrel with that or with Greene until and unless God tells us why He permits suffering and evil. Think also of the existentialists, and in particular of Camus, who spent a lifetime exploring the absurdity of the human condition—and left us with so keen a sense of exhilaration as to amount to hope. Compare the sensibility of the existentialists to that of Didion—which also stems from the 1950s—because while Didion chooses to call attention to that which is ludicrous (Huey Newton spouting rhetoric), the existentialists, and Camus in particular, chose to call attention to that which was and is tragically absurd. The difference between the ludicrous and the absurd is the difference between the mirror (Didion) and the void (Camus). Reports from the mirror are likely to be jaundiced, puling and debilitating; reports from the void can, not so strangely if you think about it long enough, inspire courage and the will to act. You will remember that transcendent moment when Camus's Sisyphus, bound to his absurd fate, poised on top of the mountain, sees his rock, his burden, plummet to the earth; at that moment, lucid and aware, Sisyphus knows that he will once again and forever push the rock, the burden, up the mountain; but in that moment, wrestling with meaning, he becomes truly human. The essence of human dignity resides in that struggle for meaning. (Another point in Sisyphus's favor was that he didn't whine, even though the gods neglected to place a swimming pool on top of the mountain for his refreshment.)

Now listen to Didion:

"I prefer not to know."

"The meaning continues to elude me."

"Nothing applies."

"Trying to find some order, a pattern, I found none."

"Almost everybody I meet in San Francisco has to go to court at some

point in the middle future. I never ask why." Why?

"None of it mattered."

Nothing matters, Didion writes. What one hears is, "Only what I have to tell you matters." And, for Didion, only surfaces matter.

Didion is like a latter-day Scarlett O'Hara: She will think about whatever it is she thinks about tomorrow when she dabbles her toes in her pool, all the while calling attention beguilingly to the hairshirt she has fashioned for herself . . . which may explain why so many male critics find her adorable.

"What is, is," Werner Erhard tells his fans. "All connections," Didion tells her fans, are "equally meaningful and equally senseless." It does not say much for us that those are the messages we like to hear. Part of Didion's appeal, I am convinced, lies in her refusal to forge connections (notably between the personal and the political or between the personal and the transcendental). In spite of the sense of dread that suffuses her work, it contains this implied message of (false) comfort: If Didion—who is so awfully smart—doesn't trouble to make connections, why should we? "What is, is." In *Play It as It Lays* we are told: "Everything was happening exactly the way it was supposed to happen." "I am not much engaged by the problems of what you might call our day, but I am burdened by the particular, the mad person who writes me a letter." Few among us would raise three cheers for the mad person who writes us letters (Didion is not alone in preferring frangipani to obscene phone calls), but, leaving that aside, the point to be made is that—I don't know how else to explain Didion's appeal—readers find Didion's fatalism and her fashionably apocalyptic outlook comforting. If the plague is indeed coming (I ask you again to think of Camus), what is there to do but wait, curtains drawn and migrainous, contemplating—if we are lucky enough to have them—our roses?

#### Terminal Lassitude

While I am sure that Didion would deny that she romanticizes insanity (indeed she reproaches Doris Lessing for celebrating the logic of the madhouse), her revulsion against the struggle for meaning is so overwhelming that, in the world of her fiction, only the cruel, the blindly sentimental, or the mad are functional and/or attempt to

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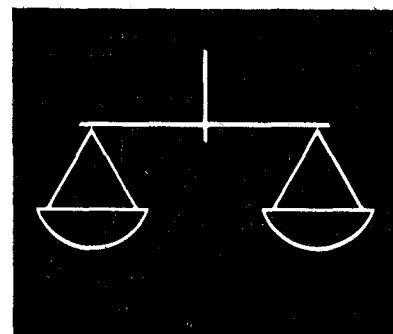
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interpret data or analyze facts. "They [the unfeeling keepers of Maria's daughter Kate] will misread the facts, invent connections, will extrapolate reasons where none exist, but I told you, that is their business here [in the looney bin]." In *A Book of Common Prayer*, Grace says, "Our frequent revolutions are made not by the *guerilleros* but entirely by people we know. This is a hard fact for the outsider of romantic sensibility to grasp." Grace—who owns 59.8 percent of the arable land of Boca Grande "and about the same percentage of the decision-making process in La Republica"—is drawn to the lonely, witless, wandering American Charlotte because, among other things, Charlotte has no interest in "the reform of the Boca Grande tax structure." In Didion's moral universe, to be interested in tax reform is to be truly crazy. (I would find this point of view funny if I didn't find it dangerous.) Any attempt at political analysis is rendered perversely romantic. Grace stays in Boca Grande (which for all practical purposes she owns) because her days "are too numbered to spend them in New York or Paris or Denver imagining the light in Boca Grande,

how flat it is, how harsh and still. How dead white at noon." It ought to be clear from this that it is Didion who is perversely romantic, and it ought to be clear that what she romanticizes is privilege and terminal lassitude. What contempt Didion has for those who "look for the sermon in the suicide, for the social or moral lesson," for those who "interpret what we see"! For Didion, the *only* appropriate response to suicide, revolution, to all the ills the flesh is heir to, is "vertigo," "nausea." (Of course it *hurts* to be crazy, but the pain is somewhat assuaged if you own a country, orchids provide some surcease from pain too.)

### Mock On, Mock On

Now, Didion tells us, many times, and in many ways, that her mind "veers inflexibly toward the particular."

To *what* in particular? Here is where we must look hard at Didion's politics. (I see now that I have been writing about politics all along—style and politics being, at least in Didion's case, apparently inseparable.)

Didion is interested in "personalities." And she reduces politics to personalities. She has been called a minimalist; better to think of her as a trivializer. In her devastating essay (from *The White Album*) "James Pike, American" (an essay that might even be said to have some "ideas," though Didion professes not to have, and not to wish to have, "ideas"), Didion scores some good acerbic points about a man foolish enough to drive "into the Jordanian desert in a white Ford Cortina rented from Avis with an Avis map and two bottles of Coca-Cola." Well of course that's folly. But Didion—let us at once call her a reactionary—cannot then refrain from telling us that, earlier, Pike was in Baltimore for the trial of the Catonsville Nine. I guess nobody's ever told her that an idea—or a cause—is not responsible for those who believe in it. By way of demolishing Pike, she manages to reduce the trial of the Catonsville Nine—an event of some political (and perhaps even spiritual) significance—to a grotesquerie. Similarly, when she reports—selectively and superficially—on the Black Panthers, on campus disorders, she zeroes in on the most foolish of spokespersons, making a mockery of the causes that inspired good men to good action by ridiculing the worst of the best. Children playing odd games, she calls campus protesters,

committing a sin of omission: These "children" were playing for their lives (Kent State?); the fact that there were con artists and idiots and tricksters among them does not alter that fact. (Because Jerry Rubin is now in love with hot tubs are we to believe that all protest against our criminal engagement in Vietnam was inspired by lunatics?) It is because Didion does not believe that human beings can modify or transform the world that she is obliged to call attention—in a series of verbal snapshots, like a Diane Arbus of prose—only to the freaks of the 1960s. In *Slouching*, she writes trenchantly about one Comrade Laski, a self-styled freelance revolutionary with no discernible goals: "I am comfortable with the Michael Laskis of this world, with those who live outside rather than in, those in whom the sense of dread is so acute that they turn to extreme and doomed commitments; I know something about dread myself, and appreciate the elaborate systems with which some people manage to fill the void, appreciate all the opiates of the people, whether they are as accessible as alcohol and heroin and promiscuity or as hard to come by as faith in God or History. . . . You see what the world of Michael Laski is: a minor but perilous triumph of being over nothingness." For Didion, all "pain killers"—heroin, God, the march on Selma, the gin and hot water and dexadrine she guzzles to write her deflating essays—are alike. They are, she tells us, alike, but clearly she finds—and we are meant to find—her own pain, and her own methods of alleviating her own pain, far more consequential and lovable than those of others.

Didion turns this dirty trick—the trick of discrediting a cause by discrediting the advocates of a cause—against Joan Baez, too ("Where the Kissing Never Stops"): Baez "did not want . . . to entertain; she wanted to move people, to establish with them some communion of emotion. [Of course this might be said of Sammy Davis Jr., too; but Sammy Davis voted for Nixon, so presumably he is exempt from this kind of shallow criticism. In fact it might be said of any performer, but never mind.] By the end of 1964 [Baez] had found, in the protest movement, something upon which she could focus the emotion. She went into the South . . . [to] Negro colleges, . . . always there where the barricade was. . . . She is the pawn of the protest

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movement." The *pawn*? Because Didion seems incapable of believing in, or exercising, volition and free will, she very neatly projects this quality onto Baez, who, admittedly, has been guilty of uttering some mushy-minded platitudes in her time (the writing on some of her album covers is quite as adolescent as Didion says it is). Didion is wicked—O.K., brilliant—when she writes about the "children" who came to Baez's peace school; they "were not," Didion says, "very much in touch with the larger scene." But what does Didion believe to be "the larger scene," and how does she perceive it? We do not know. More important, the fact that Baez has both entertained people and attempted to alleviate human misery counts for nothing in Didion's scheme of things.

Didion turns her gift for mockery against the poor old Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, too. She is wonderfully witty about the center's "ectoplasmic generality"; and one must concede that there is something inherently ludicrous in Dinah Shore's earnestly discussing civil rights with Bayard Rustin.

(There's something inherently ludicrous about the Jaycees, too: they wear funny hats. I'm the first one to laugh at a good joke; but I don't see that their funny hats give us the right to laugh at their avowed desire to "open our neighborhoods to those of all colors," and I don't find their concern with youth centers and public health clinics corny—and even if I did, I wouldn't find integrated neighborhoods and youth centers and public health clinics corny.)

Didion, who lives somewhere in Ayn Rand country, makes fun (*Run River*) of the character who "stood up for the little fellow and for his Human Right to a Place in the Sun"; she makes no apology for the character whom she quite truthfully describes as a "robber land baron."

How come, I'd like to know, her art of deflation is never put to use against those in power? When Didion deigns to mention the ruling class, she puts *ruling class* in quotes—which ought to tell us something about the woman who voted for Goldwater.

To assert that there was much about the 1960s that was bizarre, ludicrous, hedonistic and muddle-headed is like coming out in favor of white wine in carafes and fresh daisies—most of us

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recognize the obvious when we see it. Many of Didion's observations about the self-serving "children" of the 1960s are dead accurate; but that doesn't give her the right to fiddle while Watts burns. In "Los Angeles Notebook," Didion writes, "At the time of the 1965 Watts riots, what struck the imagination most indelibly were the fires. . . . The wind [that damned Santa Ana that blows through her novels and her essays] shows us how close to the edge we are." To the edge of what? What is the apocalypse? And who, or what, has brought us to this place? Do not look to Didion for answers.

"Of course," Didion says, pandering to our worst instincts, our careless and selfish desires for political quietude, "we would all like to 'believe' in something, like to assuage our private guilts in public causes, like to lose our tiresome selves." The essay in which that sentence appears was written in 1965: Vietnam. In 1965, Didion told us that "all the ad hoc committees, all the picket lines, all the brave signatures in *The New York Times* . . . do not confer upon anyone any ipso facto virtue." Well, whoever said they did? Believing as I do in original sin, I am not so crazed or so simple-minded as to believe that human nature can be redeemed by an act of Congress; but I also believe that the consequences of not acting are as drastic as the consequences of acting: One marched because it was right and fitting to do so, and one allowed Providence to handle the rest. One acted upon the principle—the principle being in this case that the war in Vietnam was atrocious, as was the bombing of children in Alabama—and allowed the consequences to take care of themselves.

### The Sentimental Fallacy

What Didion does in her essays she does also in her novels: in *A Book of Common Prayer* she parodies a Kunstler-like political being who defends the "Alameda Three" and the "Tacoma Eleven," who has an Andy Warhol silk print of Mao and who makes of having cocaine a civil libertarian issue. I think it's fine and dandy to poke fun at radical chic—I rather like it when someone like John Simon does it, because, say what you will about Simon, he operates from a moral base, however eccentric, and he includes the words *right* and *wrong* in his vocabulary. But Didion is incapable of divorc-

ing *radical* from *chic*; she hangs out with a sorry crowd.

It's true that Didion occasionally ridicules the rich; it ought not to follow that this gives her the right to express contempt for the poor. In *A Book of Common Prayer*, Charlotte (whose daughter Marin is another empty-headed "revolutionary," Patty Hearst-style) conceives an idea for a boutique in Boca Grande: "Needlepoint canvasses of her own design and Porthault linens, the market for which would have seemed limited to Elana, Bianca, Isabel, and me [La Republica's oligarchy.]" "Think," Charlotte says, "of a lathhouse crossed with a Givenchy perfume box . . . gardenias." All very well; but then we are treated to this: Didion's narrator has "no patience with the fact that almost no one in Boca Grande would cross the street to be inoculated. They were all *fatalistas* about cholera. Cholera was an opportunity for God to prove His love." If you are a Didion fan, you may be inclined to see this as Scathing Honesty ("Didion writes so tightly it cuts the flesh": *Vogue*); I see it as myopia; Didion does not see very clearly from the vantage point of whatever luxury hotel she happens to be staying in. I have seen people lining up for cholera shots, and I have seen people die of cholera, and I am here to tell you that Didion is lying.

While I'm on the subject of cholera, I'd like to make two more points, one of them obvious: Didion sees the death of one damaged child as infinitely moving: "They put shoes on her feet. Red shoes." She sees the decimation of an entire populace by cholera as a matter for scorn. I call that writing sentimental; I call that sensibility nasty. The second point: Charlotte is capable of performing noble, self-sacrificing deeds: She helps to inoculate the *fatalistas*

against cholera, risking her own life to do so. Admirable in truth. However, what we get with this is Didion's insistent, insidious—and aristocratic—perception that the only good deeds are those so private as to escape the general notice. All virtue resides in acts so private that only the participants can understand their significance. Read *A Book of Common Prayer* again, and you will see that what is implied is that having politics paralyzes the potential for performing good deeds: to swallow Didion it is necessary to swallow the notion that all acts of virtue are—*must be*—divorced from politics. . . . I wonder if Didion is acquainted with the Manichaeian heresy.

Didion—reporting from what she calls "the quintessential intersection of nothing," "the hard white core of the world" (her vanity table)—is obsessed with the child trapped in the fridge, the "children burning in the locked car in the supermarket lot," the honeymooners killed in their thermal blanket by a coral snake. Yes; this is the stuff of nightmare. How mean-spirited would it be to point out that this is also the stuff that calls attention to Didion's Exquisite Sensibility? It's hard to fault people for their obsessions, but Didion's proclivity for "aimless revelation" does tell us something: To attach oneself only to the unanalyzable incident (especially when one's subject matter intersects with the political passions of our times) is to prefer to love one's pain; it is to caress and nourish one's pain, to find it of infinitely more value than the pain of "acquaintances [who] read *The New York Times* and try to tell me the news of the world."

"The notion of general devastation had for Maria a certain sedative effect. The rattlesnake in the playpen, that was different, that was particular, that was

### GOLDEN LOTUSES (3)

Disheveled gardens,  
House as big as an estate.  
Endless empty rooms,  
Endless portraits of unknown celebrities.  
On the walls and the faded silk,  
The black and purple fingerprints  
Of the wheeling monsoons.  
Luxe and dust. Heat, heat.  
The house is inhabited by a fair-skinned woman.  
The woman is inhabited by the wind.

Octavio Paz

(Translated from the Spanish by Eliot Weinberger)

punitive." No. For the enthralled reader, I think, it works the other way around: The reader can enter into Maria's obsession with the rattlesnake in the playpen—which after all he never really expects to see except in his dreams—and, thus sedated, dismiss the "general devastation" as irrelevant to his life. The reader derives a certain masturbatory pleasure from contemplating events over which he has no control, and which he cannot be expected to analyze rationally.

Didion is the lyricist of the irrational. Some people find that charming. I do not.

### Slouching Toward Goldwater

So far I have spoken of the obvious. Now I want to move on to Didion's more subtle and covertly political messages, to a place where Ayn Rand's characters Howard Roark and John Galt—both rugged individualists whose religion is laissez-faire capitalism—would find themselves at home. In a nicely written and apparently harmless essay—"Many Mansions"—Didion expounds (and she does it well) on the sterility of the Governor's mansion in California—an enlarged version of a tract house which Jerry Brown, with a rare show of good sense, has chosen not to inhabit. Didion expresses

a preference for the old deserted Victorian mansion in Sacramento, with its secret rooms and hiding places, its gingerbread and grace. And its marble pastry table. Didion, if we are to believe her, alone among all the visitors to the Sacramento mansion, understands about marble pastry tables: "There is no way to say this without getting into touchy and evanescent and finally inadmissible questions of taste, and ultimately of class." Oh, come on! Does one have to be upper class to understand about marble pastry tables? My grandmother, who came from Calabria, understood about marble pastry tables; so do I, and I live in Brooklyn in a cosmetically renovated tenement. Julia Child talks about marble pastry tables in *McCall's*, for heaven's sake. Is Didion the only classy lady around? Why does she ruin a perfectly good essay with a gratuitous comment on class and the philistinism of the bourgeoisie?

She is tricky. In her essay on the Getty museum she exalts the Little Man—at the expense of egalitarianism. First she says, and she is right, "The Getty tells us that the past was perhaps different from the way we like to perceive it. Ancient marbles were not always attractively faded and worn. Ancient marbles once appeared just as they appear here: as strident, opulent evidence of imperial power and acquisition. Ancient marbles were not always bleached and mellow and 'tasteful.' Ancient marbles once looked as they do here: as if dreamed by a Mafia don. . . ." Then she spoils it: "The Getty advises us that not much changes. The Getty tells us that we were never any better than we are and will never be any better than we were and in so doing makes a profoundly unpopular political statement." What a quirky moral to draw. "The Getty," she says, is "a museum built not for those elitist critics but for 'the public.' Here was a museum that . . . need never depend on any city or state or federal funding, a place forever 'open to the public and free of all charges.' On the whole, 'the critics' distrust great wealth, but 'the public' does not. On the whole, 'the critics' subscribe to the romantic view of man's possibilities, but 'the public' does not . . . the Getty [is] a palpable contract between the very rich and the people who distrust them least." My dear, tell it to the taxi driver who can't get gasoline for his cab. (And now think of *The Fountainhead* and of Howard

Roark's reasons for blowing up a public housing project—and of the poor who approve in this cloud-cuckoo world, of his blowing up the housing project designed to benefit them, the rich and the poor acting in collusions against the "liberal critics"—and you will see that we are dealing with kindred so to speak "minds."

And, not so incidentally, Didion indicts the dreamers of "the American Dream" for "F.H.A. housing" and "the acquisition of major appliances. . . ." How can one tell such a woman that she is confusing necessity with greed, treating them as if they were the same?

Here is another *Fountainhead/Atlas Shrugged* epiphany: Didion is at the Hoover Dam. She thinks about water a lot. Not about the *politics* of water, she is quick to point out (maybe she never saw *Chinatown*), just about . . . water: "I just stood there with my hands on the turbine. . . . It was a peculiar moment, but so explicit as to suggest nothing beyond itself. . . . That was the image I had always seen, seen it without quite realizing what I saw, a dynamo

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finally free of man, splendid at last in its absolute isolation, transmitting power and releasing water to a world where no one is." Well, if she chooses to regard a turbine with awe commensurate with that usually reserved for the contemplation of the ark of the covenant, that's her business. But why are critics so eager to celebrate a writer who celebrates a world "free of man"? I am defeated by my own question.

She tells us ("On the Morning After the Sixties"), "If I could believe that going to a barricade would affect a man's fate in the slightest I would go to that barricade, and quite often I wish that I could, but it would be less than honest to say that I expect to happen upon such a happy ending." If you can believe that, you'll believe anything. The only happy ending for Didion is an unhappy ending. There's a lot I could say about barricades (as opposed to swimming pools), but I am now sick of Didion's paeans to the futility of human endeavor, her elevation of pain to a sacrament, and, in any case, I doubt that Didion's myopia would permit her to see a barricade if it were put up smack in the middle of her lavender sitting room. (What I would like to see is an essay by her that begins, *On the morning after the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto*. . . .)

### Cry Me a River

I suppose something should be said about Didion's essay on the women's movement, but not by me. What interests me more than her trivial and trivializing essay on women's liberation is that she sometimes expresses notions that would not be at all alien to the staunchest of feminists: "Women don't ever win. . . . Because winners have to believe they can affect the dice." If that is not a tacit admission that women are relatively powerless, what is? Of course her female characters are all "strikingly frail" (emeralds complement their fragility beautifully), their eyes are too large for their faces, and, honey, they cry a bucket. Delicate pieces of machinery, humor is alien to them. And look closely and you'll see that none of her female characters has any female friends ("There existed between [Lily] and other women a vacuum in which overtures faded out, voices became inaudible, connections broke"). And Didion weeps for them, weeps for them. Which is probably why I love one sentence in *Run River* in which Didion

allows herself to see some humor in their general incompetence: "Somebody holds the door open for Lily in a hardware store, and she thinks she has a very complex situation on her hands"; in a novel that closely resembles a gothic, that is a truly funny line.

"She had always smiled that way at men she did not know . . . wanting them to want her, recognize her as the princess in the tower." Alix Shulman might have written that sentence.

There is an essay about Georgia O'Keeffe that I find wonderful, an essay that is as "feminist" as anything in *Ms.*: "Some women fight and others do not. Like so many successful guerrillas in the war between the sexes, Georgia O'Keeffe seems to have been equipped early with an immutable sense of who she was and a fairly clear understanding that she would be required to prove it. . . . At the Art Students League in New York one of her fellow students advised her that, since he would be a great painter and she would end up teaching painting in a girls' school, any work of hers was less important than modeling for him." Could one ask for a better denunciation of cultural oppression than that?

(I can't resist quoting something Gloria Steinem once called out to a journalist on her way to interview Didion: "Ask her how come, if she spends all her time crying and swimming and struggling to open a car door, she finds the energy to write so much?")

"Things said out loud for her had an aura of danger so volatile that it could be controlled only in the dark province by those who share beds." I know few women for whom this sentence would not resonate; it speaks to a particular truth of women's condition, it is all too true. As is Didion's description of Maria's abortion and her subsequent horror at the waste, the fetus in the pail. (If I have seemed, up to now, to be unfair to Didion, if I have neglected to say that her conservatism can sometimes be a refreshing antidote to doctrinaire radicalism-by-rote, to the shiny new baubles of current public opinion . . . if I have not acknowledged that some of her sentences leap off the page and find their way to the heart, in which her sentiments have already, inarticulated, been lodged, it is because that is a path well worn: When a writer has been so much overpraised, it is difficult, if not pointless, to join the chorus.)

Didion writes about Newport: "The

very houses are men's houses, factories, undermined by tunnels and service railways, shot through with plumbing to collect salt water, tanks to store it, devices to collect rainwater, vaults for table silver, equipment, inventories of china and crystal and 'Tray cloths-fine' and 'Tray cloths-ordinary.'" That is, again, a "feminist" construct; and it reminds us that feminism, at its most useful and least cranky, is synonymous with good sense and clear vision, with sanity.

Still, for Didion to have any sympathy with anyone who aligns herself with any cause, any movement, is too much to hope for. She informs us balefully that she feels "radically separated from most of the ideas that seem to interest other people." Like Grace in *A Book of Common Prayer*, she is *de afuera*—the outsider: "I have been *de afuera* all my life." I think she wears that singularity like a badge. *I am different* translates into *I am superior*. (When I came of age in the 1950s, everyone one knew was an Outsider, and proud of it; and every Outsider belonged to a privileged Inner Circle of Outsiders, and then we grew up.)

That coddled singularity/superiority is, I am afraid, one of the reasons readers love Didion. To delight in her sensibility is to say, "I'm different, too—better than other people. I see that she sees what I see."

Didion, who can manage, maddeningly, to sound smug and remorseful at the same time, tells us that she has no opinions: "In New York [on a book tour] the air was charged and crackling and shorting out with opinion, and we [she and Quintana Roo] pretended we had some. Everyone in New York had opinions." To pretend to carry no mental baggage at all makes one a voyeur at the party, a detached onlooker at the execution. There is a precariously thin line between voyeurism and decadence; and I am bound also to conclude that Didion, the participant-observer—at Hollywood parties, at the Manson trial, etc., etc.—titillates her readers with faint whiffs of decadence which emanate not only from the observed but from the observer—a poseur who does indeed have consistent opinions, although they are disguised as instinctual, idiosyncratic reactions to ephemeral phenomena, and thereby rendered less threatening and more winsome.

The reason I don't love Didion, after all is said and done, is that I need to be

told forthrightly what a writer loves or more precisely what she values. I don't like to be seduced by indirection.

We know she loves—or is obsessed by—water. (There is not a day, she says, that she does not think of lifesavers “and what they are doing, what situations they face, what green-glass water.” [She also—wouldn't you know it?—gets seasick.] There is in addition not a day that she doesn't think of the Hoover Dam and of the Quail Reservoir in Los Angeles County: “I knew I had missed the only vocation for which I had any instinctive affinity: I wanted to drain Quail myself.” Delirious overstatement; but then again, one of the things Didion can be said to love is delirium.) She loves swimming pools—which, she would have us believe, are “a symbol not of affluence, but of order, of control over the uncontrollable.” And she loves orchids and greenhouses (all her life she has “craved the light and silence of greenhouses . . . all my life I had been trying to spend time in one greenhouse or another”). That's nice. She has been enamored of “yellow theatrical silk” curtains, too.

That's nice. And she loves John Wayne and she loves Rhett Butler.

Like all writers with an apocalyptic turn of mind, she, like Lily in *Run River*, values a golden past never precisely defined; she has nostalgia for “a place of infinite possibilities for faith and honor and the grace of commonplace pleasures”; and she has dreamed of an unattainable “just-around-the-corner country where the green grass grew.”

In an essay called “Self-Respect,” she lets us know that she abhors “sins of commission and omission, the trusts betrayed, the promises subtly broken, the gifts irrevocably wasted through sloth or cowardice or carelessness.” These are pretty sentiments, prettily expressed; but her sense of tragic regret rings hollow to me; it is as nonspecific as her proposed remedy: “the willingness to accept responsibility for one's own life is the source from which self-respect springs.”

“Except on that most primitive level—our loyalties to those we love—what could be more arrogant than to claim the primacy of personal conscience?”

Then to what *does* she give primacy? If not to personal conscience, to authority? To a “social code,” she answers: “I want to be quite obstinate about insisting that we have no way of knowing—beyond that fundamental loyalty to the social code—what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong,’ what is ‘Good’ and what ‘Evil.’” But to what social code? framed when, and by whom? *for* whom? How can I trust her when I do not know the answers to those questions? When she and her family talk about “sale-lease-backs and right-of-way condemnations we are talking in code about the things we like best,” she says—“the yellow fields and the cottonwoods and the rivers rising and falling and the mountain roads closing when the heavy snow comes in.” I can't trust that. I can't trust her because when she talks about “the long golden afternoons that [are] no more” in her native Sacramento, her language is suffused with that peculiar sentimentality one associates with an Englishman who once enjoyed the glories and the privilege of the Raj—an imperialist mentality is at work here, a gentlemanly, aristocratic sensibility that

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obdurately ignores the realities of class and economics and remembers only the long shadows on the green grass on a summer afternoon. Both are real—the golden afternoons and the sale-lease-backs (the money); Didion dismisses half the equation.

Her idea of peace, or of salvation, is to retreat to a place like Guyamas or Alcatraz, where there is no "vanity"—which is to say, a place where there is "no trace of human endeavor." (Then what is she doing at those Hollywood parties with "gangsters" and "fags"?)

Tell me how I can love a woman for whom New York in the 1950s—the city of "the shining and perishable dream"—was F.A.O. Schwarz and Best's and dancing to the music of Lester Lanin and crying at Toots Shor's and Sardi's East.

She has trouble, she says, "maintaining the basic notion that keeping promises matters in a world where everything I was taught seems beside the point." What was she taught? For what, exactly, does she repine? What are those "extreme and doomed commitments" for which she professes love? From what magic kingdom is she in exile?

In the 1960s, she says, "no one at all seemed to have any memory or mooring." But to what is she moored?

What she is moored to, of course, is her *Angst*. And her *Angst* is not the still point of the turning world.

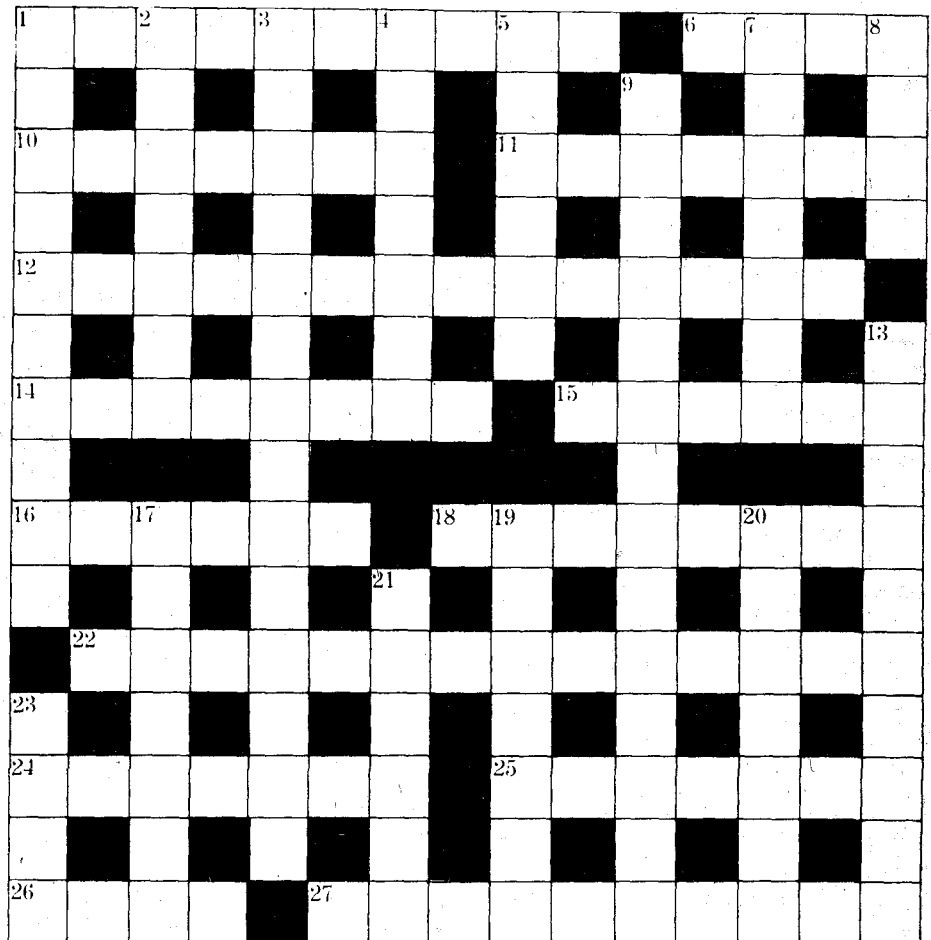
Anyone whose love is reserved almost entirely for the past can have only disdain for the present. And can consequently not be trusted to tell us the truth. Be wary.

Make no mistake: I too am interested in visits to the interior. I know that what happens in the recesses of the human heart is at least as interesting as what happens at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. Yes, everything begins in the human heart. But the human heart is not vacuum-packed. The pulsebeat from any breast, however armored, is felt, not just in private contracts—"doomed commitments"—between private persons but in Selma, in Haight-Ashbury, in Vietnam, in South Africa, in East New York. Reports from those locations are also reports from the heart. And Didion's heart is cold.

Well, I have spent a long time now in Didion's world. "The baby frets, the maid sulks [or would, if I had one]. I . . . lie down." □

## Crossword Puzzle No. 1789

FRANK W. LEWIS



### ACROSS

- 1 and 6 Getting angry just because someone makes more headroom by doing it? (7,3,4)
- 10 Going topside unexpectedly, as one might after heading into the bank. (7)
- 11 How atonal operas sound to some, if somewhat stuffy. (7)
- 12 Churchman and politician—not necessarily typified by Brigham Young. (5,9)
- 14 Didn't like being dispatched in the grass. (8)
- 15 Two banks in one. (6)
- 16 Females appearing in Scene I? (6)
- 18 See 4 down
- 22 With detective plays, criminals are sometimes in the last one, though perhaps less red-handed. (6,2,3,3)
- 24 A burning sensation of GWTW. (7)
- 25 Put down. (7)
- 26 At the card table, puts down dishes perhaps. (4)
- 27 City people we ken. (Sorry to upset them.) (3,7)

### DOWN

- 1 Like rubies, the lady's jewelry might mislead you. (3,7)
- 2 Hampers, presumably by grabbing the feet. (7)
- 3 One might call on you as a matter of policy. (9,5)

- 4 and 18 across Is learning full of suspense if one does so? (4,3,4,2,2)
- 5 Suit manly skills, no doubt. (6)
- 7 Cow, ewe, or a V-sort. (7)
- 8 and 23 Time doesn't necessarily fly during them. (4,4)
- 9 Tennyson wasn't considering going against the legal profession, when dying. (8,3,3)
- 13 Scram, Bud, out of 25—it's wrong to count your blessings! (10)
- 17 Saint in an upcoming place for a drive, possibly showing rank and distinction. (7)
- 19 A bad name to put on a pen, it could be granted. (7)
- 20 It's just partly a pretty face, or perhaps the main show. (7)
- 21 An order to relax, possibly by one who does a lot of kidding. (2,4)
- 23 See 8 down

### SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1788

ACROSS: 1 In the doghouse; 10 Rover; 11 Marriages; 12 Audiences; 13 Spear; 14 Forever after; 19 April in Paris; 22 Paves; 24 Animation; 25 Lashed out; 26 India; 27 Be of good cheer. DOWN: 2 Nevada; 4 Damoclean; 5 Girls; 6 Omits; 7 Suggests; 8 and 3 Great horned owl; 9 Usurers; 15 Emaciated; 16 Animalish; 17 Happily; 18 Crevasse; 20 Girdle; 21 Sneak; 23 Sheaf; 24 Ab ovo.

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